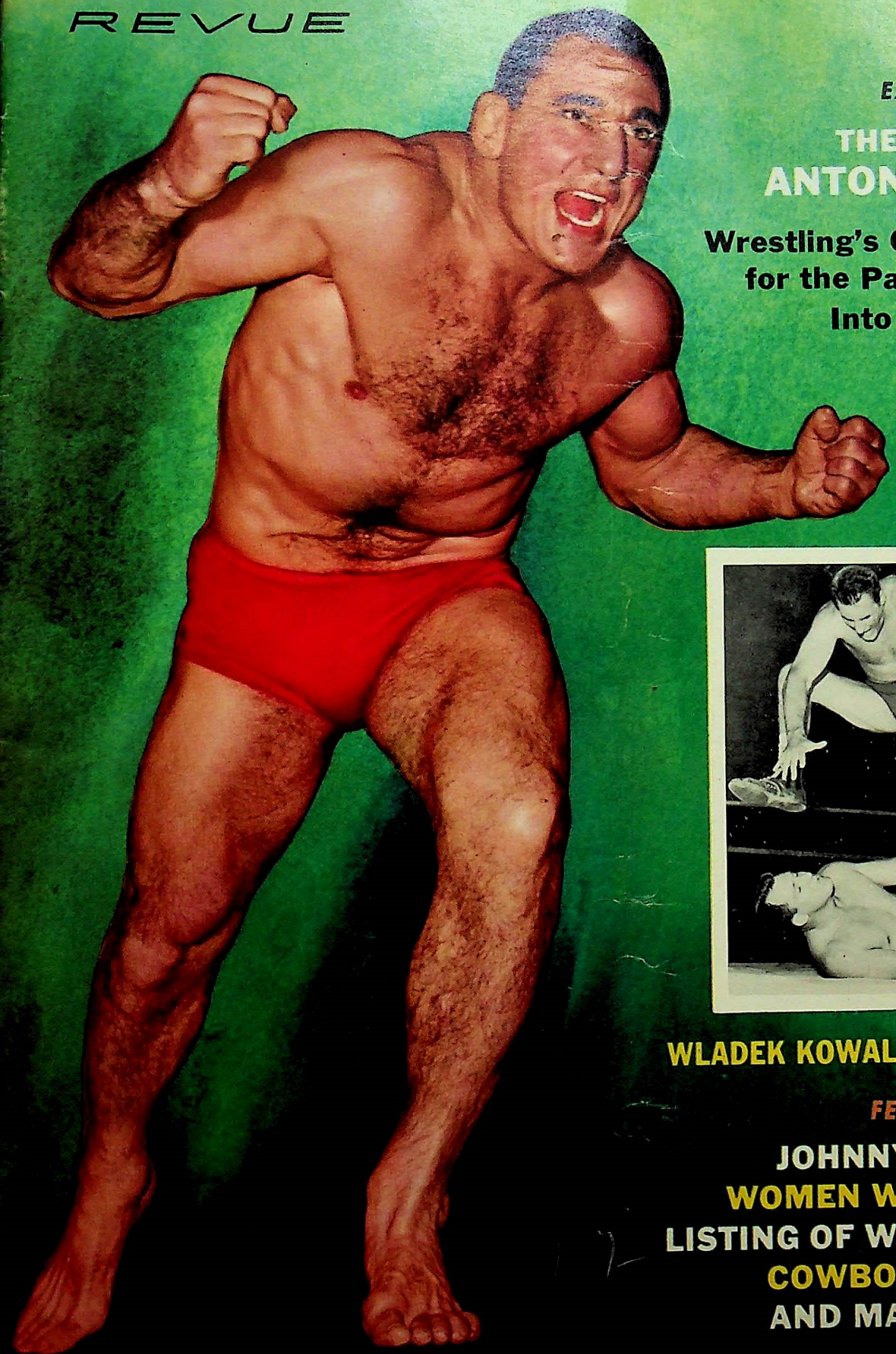
THE MAGAZINE FOR WRESTLING FANS

Wrestling REVUE

SUMMER 1961/50¢



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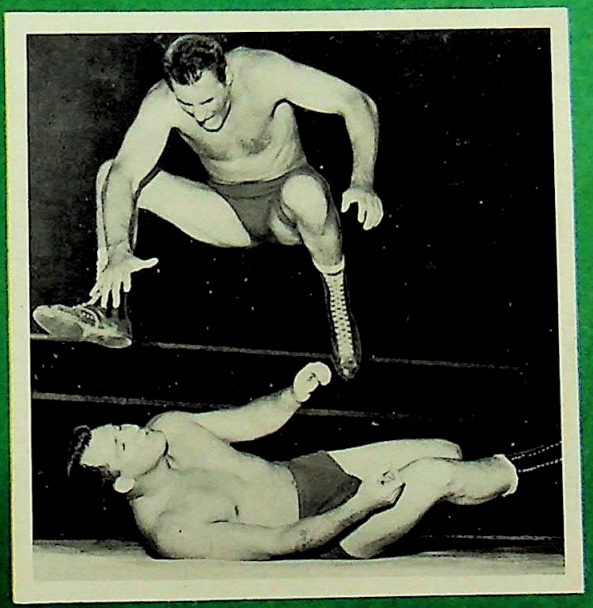

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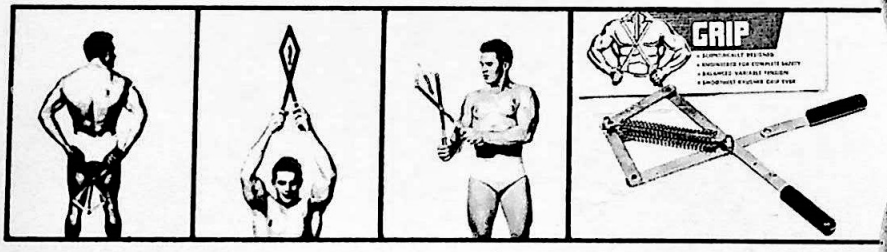

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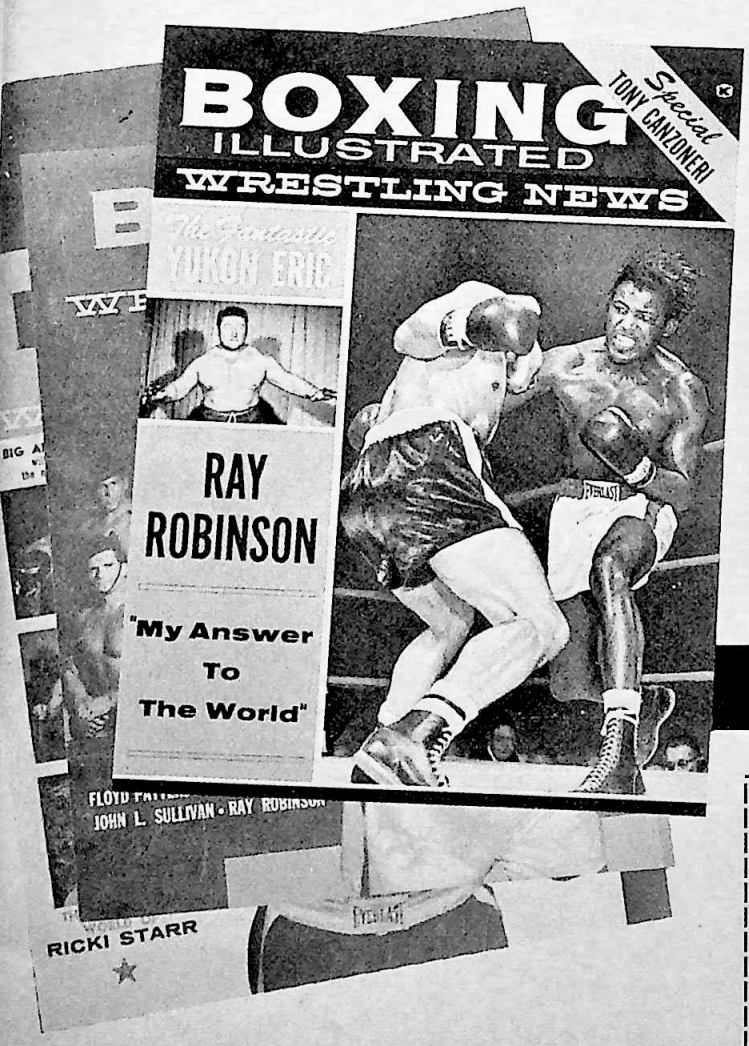

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VOL. 2, NO. 3 SUMMER, 1961

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Wrestling REVUE

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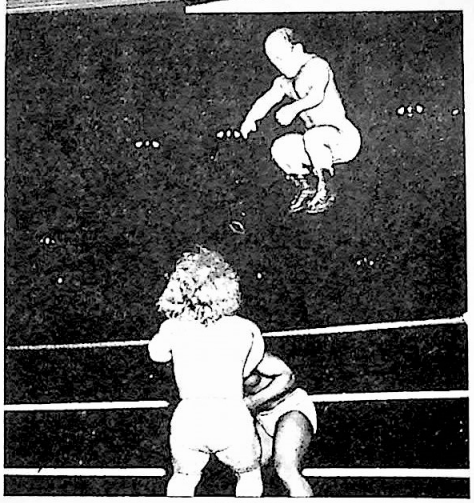

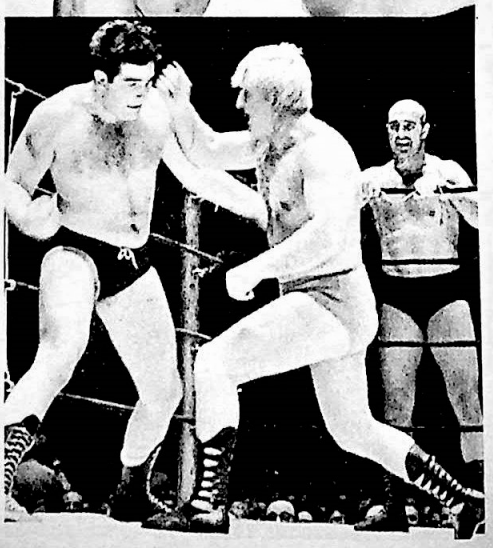

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WRESTLING REVUE, published quarterly by Champion Sports Publishing Corp., P.O. Box 384, Rockville Centre, L. I., New York. Address all subscriptions, changes of address and matters pertaining thereto to: Wrestling Revue, P.O. Box 384, Rockville Centre, L. I., New York. Address all editorial and advertising matter to Champion Sports Publishing Corp., 545 Fifth Ave., Suite 609, New York 17, New York. Reprinting in whole or in part forbidden except by written permission of the Publishers. Unacceptable contributions will be returned if accompanied by sufficient first class postage. We cannot accept responsibility for unsolicited contributions. SUBSCRIPTION RATES: $2.00 per year in U.S. $2.50 in Canada; $3.00 in all other countries. Foreign subscriptions and sales should be remitted by International Money Order payable in U.S. funds. Second-class postage paid at Rockville Centre, N. Y. and at additional mailing offices. Copyright by Champion Sports Publishing Corp., 1961.

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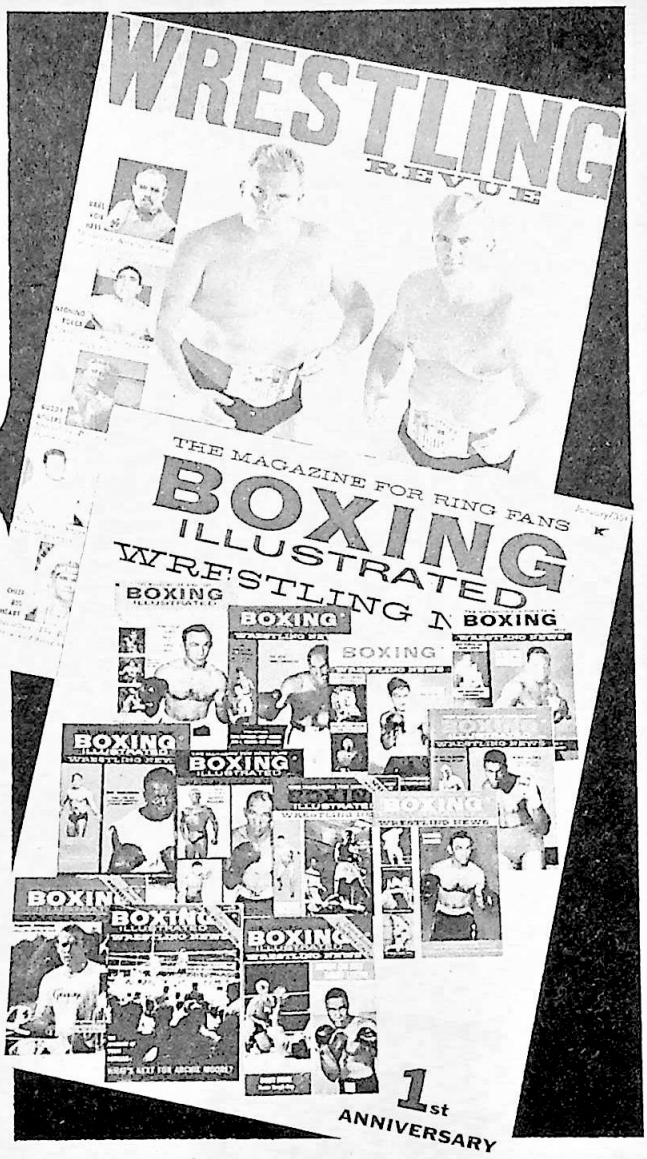

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Readers Pros and

ASHAMED

Sirs:

After reading your story about the most repulsive wrestler in the business, I am ashamed to admit that Gene Kiniski is a Canadian. I was also very much disgusted to learn of the way St. Louis fans took his unfair victory over Wilbur Snyder (Spring/61).

Kiniski came here to Vancouver not long ago to wrestle British Empire Champion Whipper Billy Watson. Here is what happened: Kiniski was stabbed in the side by an unidentified fan. He was beaten (by fans) with chairs, ringsteps and just plain fists. He was hauled away to the General Hospital in an ambulance. Then we ran him out of town.

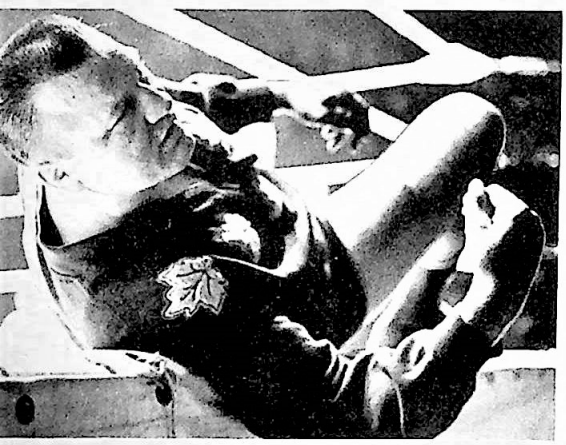
I make mention of this because in your article you showed a picture of Kiniski offering to take on the entire St. Louis crowd. We in Vancouver accepted that same challenge and we beat him to a pulp.

It seems to me that bowling, rather than wrestling, is the thing for those spineless creatures in St. Louis to watch. I hope you print this letter. Maybe those guys in St. Louis will wake up and do something next time Kiniski comes to their city. Oh why was Gene Kiniski born in Canada. It gives our great country such a bad, bad name.

BRUCE ALLEN

Vancouver, Canada

■ Kiniski was disqualified in that St. Louis bout with Snyder—ED.



KINISKI challenges St. Louis crowd. "It was different in Vancouver."

AMONG THE TOP TEN

Sirs:

We, the wrestling fans of Wilmette (Illinois) Junior High School, enjoyed your terrific coverage of the Gene Kiniski-Wilbur Snyder match (Spring/61). We hope that future issues of WRESTLING REVUE will contain similar coverage of important bouts.

Although we consider your "Official Wrestling Ratings" basically fair, we feel that Art "Sailor" Thomas definitely belongs among the top ten.

DAVE CLELAND
CHIP CHIPLEY
JOHN HIGGINS
JIM ROSENBERG

Wilmette, Ill.

UP TO DATE

Sirs:

I enjoyed your Spring/61 issue very much. My only complaint is that story titled "The Magnetic Appeal of Johnny Barend" by Allen Ressler.

I am sure that Mr. Ressler spent considerable time and effort researching the facts, and I also feel sure that the author was under the impression that he was presenting a true picture of his subject. Yet he completely ignored the last two years of Barend's career.

The fact is that Barend, teamed with his tag team partner, Magnificent Maurice, is the most disgusting individual one could possibly see in the ring. His "Magnetic Appeal," as Mr. Ressler puts it, has fallen to zero.

Barend, as the article clearly indicated, was a perfectly clean and honest wrestler at one time. But this honesty and cleanliness did not accompany him to Ohio, as hundreds of thousands of mat fans will tell you.

Your fine publication is very well received here, and I will continue to be one of your many loyal followers, but in the future I do hope that you will bring your stories up to date.

BUCKY WEAVER

Maysville, Ky.

HOT OFFER

Sirs:

I'll pay ten bucks for an 8 x 10 print of that picture of Kathy Starr kicking Jessica Rogers' (Spring/61, Page 71). Is it a deal?

KENNETH PETERS

New Orleans, La.

■ Sorry, no deal—ED.

KATHY STARR vs. JESSICA ROGERS. "I'd give ten bucks."

NEVER HEARD OF KIM

Sirs:

I thought the selection of pictures in your "Autograph Album" (Spring/61) was away off base. For example: Who ever heard of Lou Kim?

DARLENE MCINTOSH

Pueblo, Colo.

■ Lou Kim (real name Rube Wright) is without question one of the finest wrestlers of the past quarter century. Any experienced wrestler will verify this statement—ED.

FOLLOW-UP ON MARY LOU

Sirs:

Your six page spread covering the wrestling debut of Mary Lou Erman (Spring/61) was brilliantly done. I felt as if I were suffering through every dreadful minute of her ordeal along with her. I thought you would be interested to know that after seeing your story Mary Lou was greatly encouraged and at the present time is undefeated in her last eight matches.

SANDRA REECE

Orlando, Fla.

MARY LOU ERMAN after debut. "The story did her good."

COVER ONE HE LOST

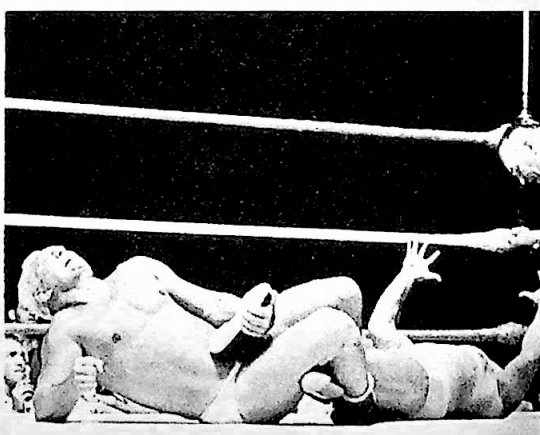
Sirs:

Here on the West Coast Edouard Carpentier is considered to be the world heavyweight champion, despite the fact that you recognize Pat O'Connor. Now you may be absolutely right about O'Connor, but I would like you to mention one match in the last two or three years which Carpentier lost. I don't think you can

MICHAEL GERHARDS

Huntington Park, Calif.

■ See cut below. Carpentier, one of the finest wrestlers in the world, is recognized as champion in California, disputing O'Connor's claim to the title. This condition will continue to exist until a showdown match pits them against each other. We think it should be held soon—ED.



CARPENTIER quits to BUDDY ROGERS. Montreal, Sept., 1960

Cons

WELL DESERVED

Sirs:

I was delighted to see your sparkling story about Marvin Mercer (Spring/61). Mercer, who is one of the genuine pros of wrestling, has been neglected by promoters far too long. I hope your article results in national recognition for this very well deserving veteran of the mat.

NAT COFFEY

Milwaukee, Wis.

VALENTINE A VILLAIN?

Sirs:

How could you possibly call Johnny Valentine a villain (Spring/61)? We don't know how he acts in other parts of the country, but here in the east he never uses foul tactics. He is not a villain, he is a *reformed* villain. There is a big difference.

STELLA FORTIOS

New York, N. Y.

■ For an explanation see Valentine story in this issue—ED.

CONFUSED

Sirs:

I thoroughly enjoy your magazine, but please get me straight on something. In your Spring/61 issue you refer to Johnny Valentine as a "villain." Now I have watched wrestling in New York, Washington, D. C., and Connecticut for the past 2 years and I have yet to see Valentine commit a foul, *unless* prompted to by an opponent.

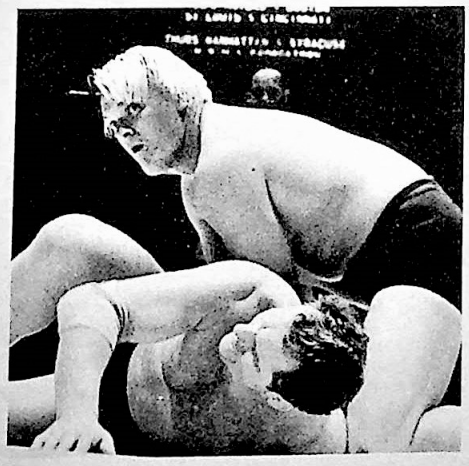
Here is a quote from your magazine: "It isn't hard to determine what makes Hard-Boiled Haggerty one of the most unlikable of all villains. Not hateful, necessarily, the way Valentine or Von Hess are hateful—but just plain unlikable."

Once, while watching a match, I saw the fans go wild. A wrestler was being kicked, gouged, etc., and the fans were yelling "WE WANT VALENTINE! . . . WE WANT VALENTINE!" It seems many others have the same opinion of Valentine as me.

One of us is wrong, unless there is more than one Johnny Valentine!

ANTHONY PRESUTTI

Easton, Pa.



JOHNNY VALENTINE.
"A reformed villain."

GIVE THE NEW BOYS A BREAK

Sirs:

Although WRESTLING REVUE is without question the finest wrestling magazine ever published, I do have a few criticisms. First of all, it isn't published often enough. Four issues a year is too few. There should be at least six, preferably twelve.

Secondly, your coverage of new wrestlers is weak. Take fine young prospects like Jack Allen and Bob Kappell, two boys who wrestle here in the midwest and delight the crowds. Both deserve the tremendous lift and encouragement an article in WRESTLING REVUE would give them. Why not give them a break.

B. W. CASEY

Chicago, Ill.

NOT ALI BEY!

Sirs:

In your article "What Makes A Villain?" (Spring/61) you gave the impression that Ali Bey is a real monster. I take exception to this. Actually, Ali Bey, who I know well, is a warm and very wonderful person.

I also think it is a terrible waste of valuable space to publish stories about wrestling promoters. Who cares about them? Every inch of WRESTLING REVUE should be devoted to the wrestlers themselves.

DENNIS OBLANDER

Saginaw, Mich.

Turkey's ALI BEY.
"A good guy."

A WASTE

Sirs:

Your article explaining how to take wrestling pictures off a television screen (Spring/61) was a complete waste of space. I'm certain that most of your readers would have much preferred having those pages devoted to a wrestling story. The article you published would have been suitable for a photography magazine, but for a wrestling publication—Never!

RICHARD YOUNG

San Francisco, Calif.

VALUABLE ADDITION

Sirs:

I thought your article "TV Picture-Taking" was a valuable addition to your excellent magazine. In fact the wrestling fans in my area have started a club called "TV Picture-Takers." We plan to trade pictures among each other and invite fans throughout the country to form the same kind of clubs. In that way we can eventually own valuable collections covering a cross-section of wrestling in America. Thanks for giving we fans a refreshingly new kind of hobby.

SCOTT MEYER

Chicago, Ill.

THE GREATEST

Sirs:

I have been told that Mildred Burke was without question the greatest woman wrestler who ever lived. Since she wrestled before I developed my interest in this fascinating sport, I wonder if you would publish a picture of Miss Burke so that I can see what she looked like.

DOUGLAS MORRISON

Phoenix, Ariz.

MILDRED BURKE.
"To see what she looked like."

ALL SOLD OUT

Sirs:

I discovered WRESTLING REVUE with the third issue published. Now, of course, I am most anxious to obtain copies of the first two issues. I believe they were Fall, 1959 and Winter, 1960. Are they still available? I would appreciate hearing from you.

MARGARET WOOLEY

Hagerstown, Md.

■ Regret the first two issues are completely sold out—ED.

NUMBER ONE

Sirs:

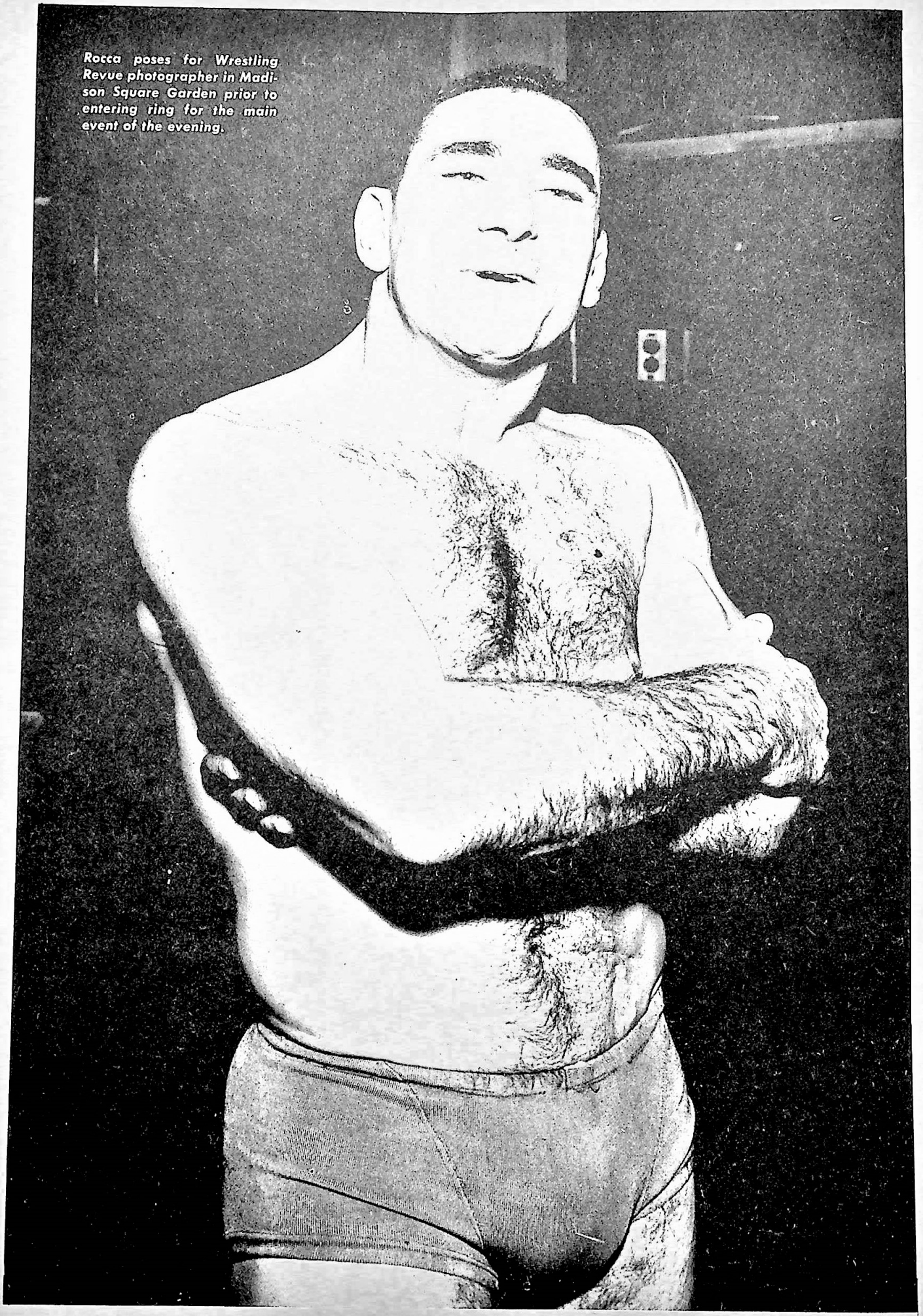
I should like to offer my views as to how the ratings should appear. My opinions are based on years of personal observation.

1. Dick The Bruiser
2. Killer Kowalski
3. Gene Kiniski
4. Cowboy Ellis
5. Pat O'Connor
6. Whipper Billy Watson
7. Bobby Managoff
8. Buddy Rogers
9. Edouard Carpentier
10. Wilbur Snyder

The Bruiser should certainly be Number One and you haven't even rated him at all. I suggest you visit Detroit and take a good look at him. If you do, you'll rate him as I do—Number One.

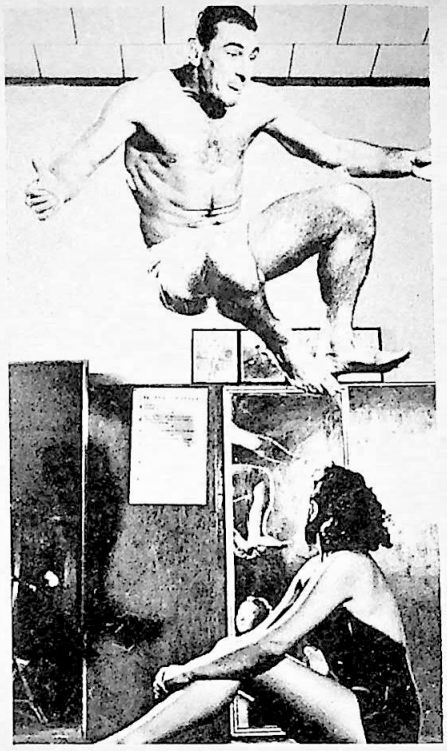
DONALD MESSNER

Chelsea, Mich.



Rocca poses for Wrestling Revue photographer in Madison Square Garden prior to entering ring for the main event of the evening.

ANTONINO THE GREAT



This publicity photo of Rocca was taken in 1947, the year of his New York debut. It was supposed to illustrate his great agility.

Antonino Rocca is gifted with the same hard to define qualities that once made small boys worship Babe Ruth and women adore Clark Gable. Here is an exclusive portrait of one of the most remarkable men of his generation. BY HAL HENNESEY

ANTONIO ROCCA IS ONE of the world's most remarkable men. He is a man of many faces, moods and skills. To millions of people throughout the world he is a great wrestler who, a dozen years ago, brought new life and vitality to an ancient sport. But to those who know him well he is more, much more.

Said the late great maestro Arturo Toscanini: "Rocca and I have been friends for many years. One night, while I was on my way to a concert, I stopped off at the arena where he was wrestling and I went to see him in the dressing room. We talked about music. He is a great expert on the subject. I kept my audience waiting at the concert hall and he kept his audience waiting in the arena."

Said the lighting expert for a big mid-west sports palace: "The night Rocca was wrestling in our city I was having trouble with the west bank of lights over the ring. Rocca made a few suggestions, which I followed, and everything was fixed just like that. He sure knows a lot about electricity. In fact, he's an electrical engineer."

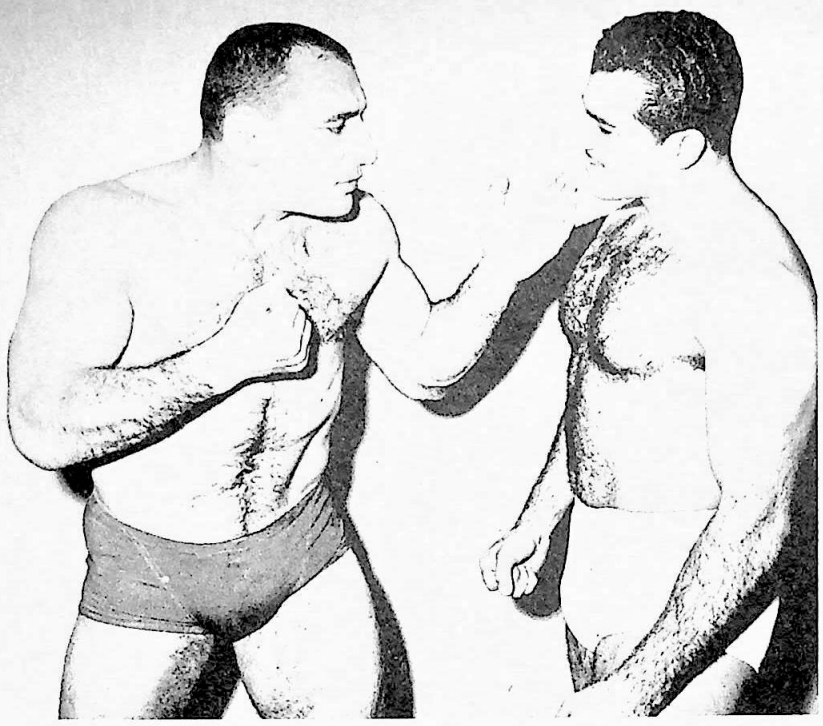
Said a Puerto Rican mat fan: "One day I am sitting in the park with some friends when Rocca comes along. He is dressed in a sports shirt with short sleeves. When he saw us he smiled and stopped to talk. Soon he was telling us about his way of living. 'Always remember to live right, to obey the laws of nature,' he said. 'Eat what you like and sleep when you like. And above all, get rhythm into your daily living.' Then, suddenly, a very pretty girl went wiggling by. Antonino stopped talking and, along with the rest of us, watched her as she passed. Then he started to talk again. Ah, what a man is that Rocca. He knows how to *live!*"

Said a retired wrestler in Buenos Aires: "Do I remember Rocca? I should say so! Back in 1946, I especially remember him. That was the year Japan sent its three best wrestlers to Argentina. I guess they wanted to save face after losing the war; it made them very vicious. They beat just about everybody in South America—including me. That's why I am crippled now. After my bout with Takeo Okitaro, the best of the Japs, Rocca was matched with him and Antonino sent word to me at the hospital, "When you hear about the match tonight, you will see that I have avenged you." Rocca was the Argentine champion, although very young. When he met Okitaro he avenged not only me but all South America. With a series of body slams that almost decapitated his opponent, Rocca *killed* Okitaro! My friend, that Rocca is a real man!"

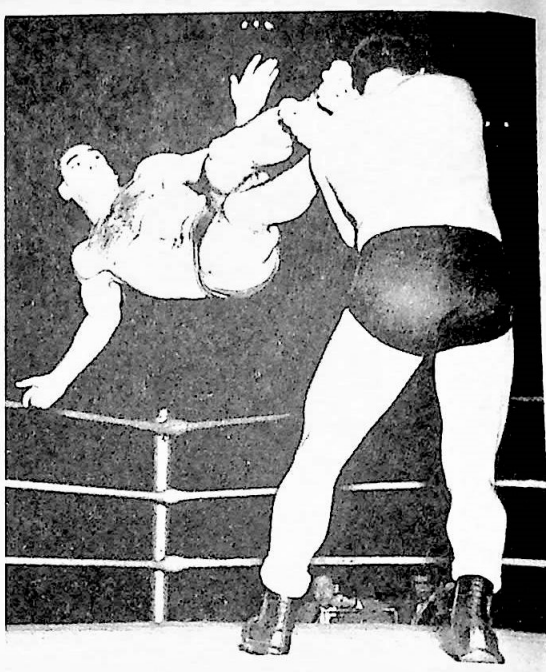
These anecdotes taken from the life of Antonino Rocca reveal a few of the many facets of this truly unique man. A man whose abilities are so astounding and varied that, with his energy directed into any one of a half dozen professions, he could easily have become famous in any of them. Former track coach Dean Cromwell of the University of Southern California, known as the "Makers of Champions," once said of Rocca: "This is one of the most amazing athletes I have ever seen. He's a great champion; he has perfect coordination. Personally, I think Rocca would have knocked out any boxer in the world, had he chosen to become a fighter! When the athlete history of this century is written, I predict that Antonino Rocca will be listed as one of the really big names."

Dean Cromwell didn't have to wait. Already the life, the career and the records of Rocca have made him one of the biggest names not only in this century, but in all athletic history. He is, in fact, a living legend, revered with the kind of reverence men once held for Babe Ruth, and which, in a different way, women once held for Rudolph Valentino.

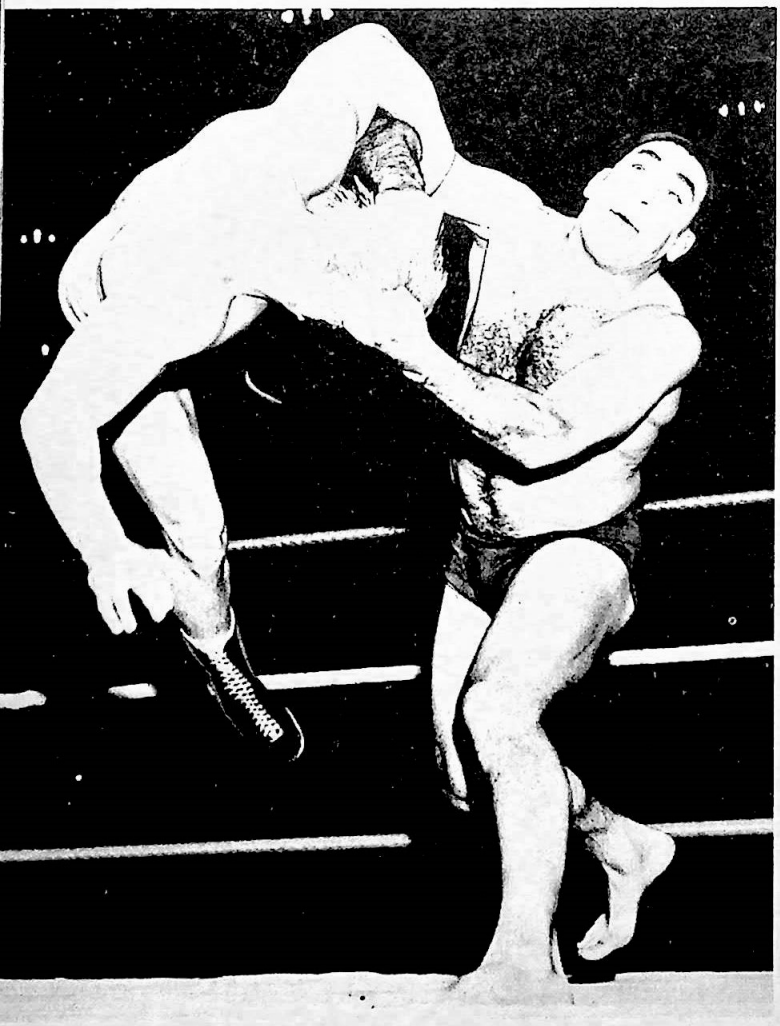
Analyzing this popularity is not easy. For Rocca is not merely a wrestler, or a performer. He is a vital force within himself; he contains inside his superb body a kind



The tag team of Rocca and Miguel Perez, right, was remarkably successful.



The Rocca drop kick alone was worth the price of admission to see. He can raise his entire body 7 feet off and parallel to the ground.



Rocca never used foul tactics unless driven to it. When Buddy Rogers pulled Antonino's hair, this is what he got from Rocca in return. Bout took place in Boston in May 1959.

of electro-chemical energy that seems to crackle from him to his audience like a blue flame across a spark gap. And it does not matter whether his audience consists of 50,000 wildly cheering wrestling fans or a passer-by on the street. The electric tension is always there.

"I love people!" rhapsodizes Rocca, and you know he means it. "I will be wrestling at the age of 75," he says, "—and I will live to be 150," and you know he is sincere.

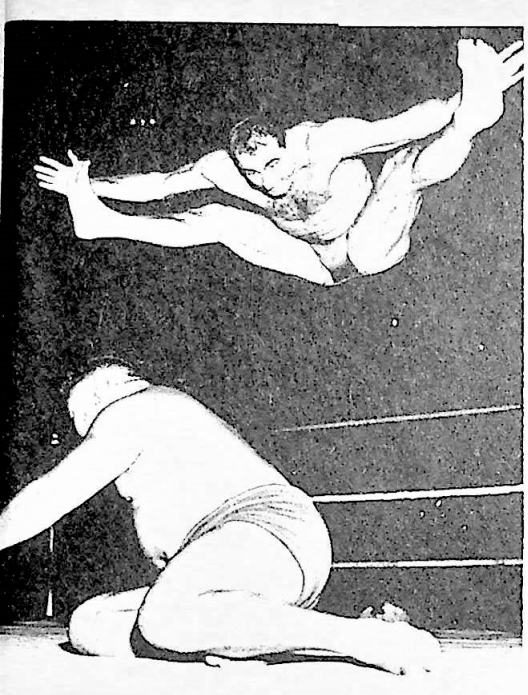
That is tipoff number two in the analysis of Antonino Rocca; his sincerity. Even though you may know that he exaggerates a fact now and then, you are willing to forgive him; he does not lie—he merely gives his statements a sweeping dramatic quality.

For example, he once told an interviewer, with a perfectly straight face, that he once wrestled 17 Chavante Indians, and wound up giving each a broken arm with his fearful wrist lock. An ethnologist or any Brazilian—could tell you that no more than one or two of these wildest of jungle Indians, the Chavantes, have ever been close enough to civilization to see a bottle of Coca-Cola.

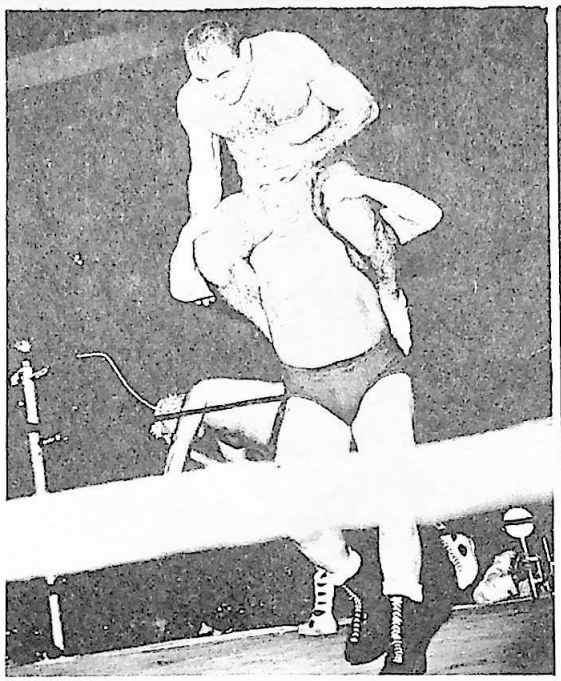
But when Rocca talks this way, it doesn't matter. You *want* to believe it.

Partly because of this tendency to exaggerate and dramatize, many of the facts of Rocca's beginnings as man and wrestler are obscure. From the wealth of fiction, however, we are able to arrive at enough truth to get a glimpse of the great man's life before he became a world institution.

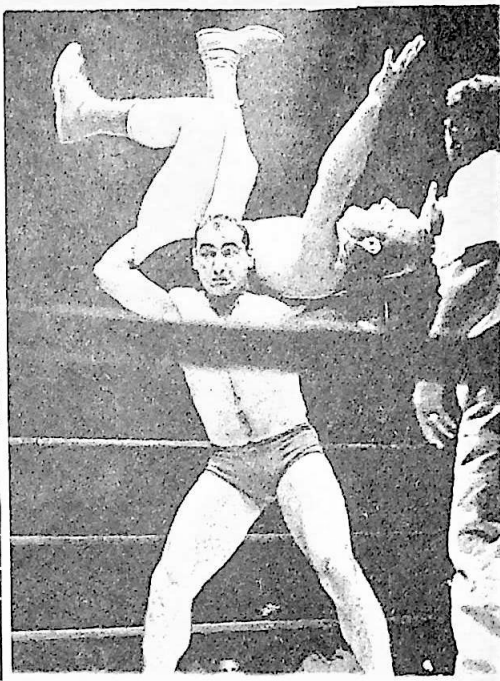
It is fairly well established that Antonino Rocca was born in Treviso, Italy, near Venice, on April 13, 1927. He is probably a little older than the 33 years this gives him, but he is certainly no more than 35. A young 35, at that. His parents moved to Buenos Aires when Tony was fifteen and weighed 200 pounds. From the very beginning he showed great prowess as an athlete. This quality was inherited from his father, a champion fencer.



Japanese star Togo panics and makes mad dash for cover as Rocca zooms aloft. A short while later Togo was pinned.



One of Rocca's trademarks is to leap on shoulders of his opponent and ride him around the ring. Here Roy Shires gets the "treatment."



Rocca displays his tremendous strength by lifting 250-pound Hans Schmidt onto his shoulders.

It was his father who encouraged Tony and suggested he try his skill at *all* sports until he found the one he could do best and make the most money at.

He tried them all—he became a master rugby player, a skillful track man, a marvelous fencer. But he could make big money at only wrestling. The handwriting, as early as 1942, was on the wall.

The real story of Antonino Rocca started the day he was sighted by a tourist in Buenos Aires—an ex-wrestler, named Nick Elitch. Nick, as it happened, was also a kind of goodwill ambassador and talent scout for one of the most intellectual wrestling promoters in the U. S., Dr. Karl Sarpolis, of Texas. When Elitch saw Rocca kick the heads off a succession of opponents with his size 13 feet, he knew instinctively that he had stumbled onto something very special.

He called Sarpolis, collect. "Doc," said Elitch, "I just saw a guy wrestling in his bare feet, who—no, Doc, he wears trunks like anybody else; just his *feet* are bare—a guy who leaps into the air in the middle of the ring and kicks the other guy in the face. Knocks him flat, then pins him. He never loses. Not only that, he can really wrestle."

Aften ten minutes of raving, at ten bucks a minute, Elitch was told to get the young man aboard the next Texas bound plane.

Rocca made two debuts in America. The first one didn't count, since all it did was set him up for the second. Doc Sarpolis, after briefing the new sensation-to-be about American wrestling, shipped him off to St. Louis. There, for some reason that is still obscure, things didn't quite jell the way Rocca had anticipated. The way they jelled just a few months later, when he made his historic appearance at Brooklyn's Ridgewood Grove arena.

First he had to get there.

At that time, the most influential wrestling promoter was Joseph "Toots" Mondt. Mondt knew wrestlers, having himself been one of the greatest of all time. He was told that there was a startling young South American wrestling in St. Louis and that he should take a good look. Now, when a man of Mondt's standing goes out to the hinterlands to take a look at a wrestler, that wrestler must come highly recommended. Rocca, who started his career in America by wrestling in the main events, came so high—both in recommendation and in salary—that Mondt flew west the same day he got the phone call from St. Louis.

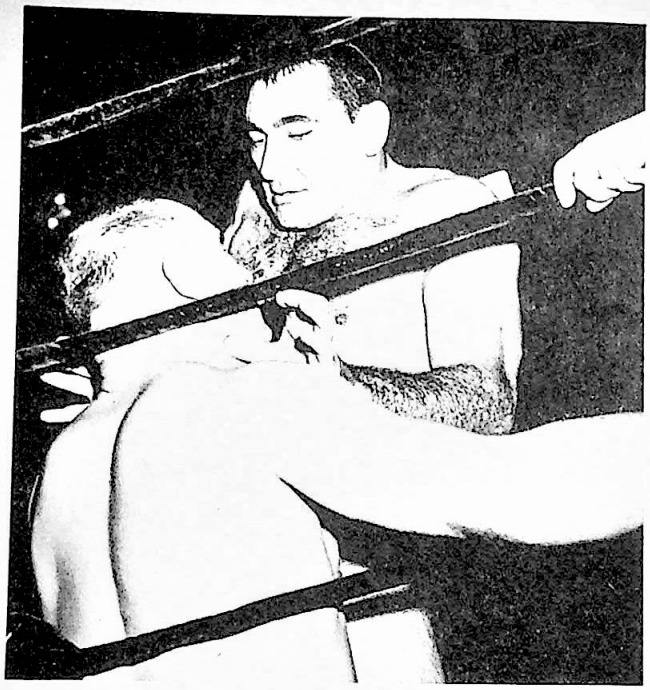
What he saw made even his jaded eye brighten. "The minute I saw this kid, I knew I had a gold mine," he says. "At least, it was my gold mine if I could get the St. Louis promoter to sign him over."

What happened then was doubtless one of the greatest personal triumphs in diplomacy, let alone wrestling promotion. Mondt, when asked what he thought about the new wrestler who was in the air more often than on the mat, shrugged and eyed his cigar. He said to the promoter who had Rocca under contract, "He's okay, I guess, but he's only a fad. He'll never last once the fans get fed up with those big feet of his."

He paused to let this downgradation sink in. "On the other hand," he said tiredly, "I'll do you a favor. Wrestling is dying in New York. We need a new face to pep things up. This kid might do it—for awhile, at least—then we can always send him someplace else. I'll take him off your hands, if you want."

The contract was signed. Toots Mondt had Rocca—and so did the world.

Debut number two was a fantastic thing in the realm of sports. It took place, as stated, at Ridgewood Grove. Introduced as Argentine Rocca in the main event, Antonino wrestled as he had been wrestling for five years in South America. His feet were bare, the trademark that first established him. He wore no fancy jackets or



Hans Schmidt is pressed against ropes by Rocca during exciting bout in Chicago which Antonino won.

bleached hair, nor did any valet or shapely maiden sprinkle attar of roses in his wake. He just wrestled.

And how he wrestled! When Rocca entered the Ridgewood ring for the first time, it was as though an electric shock had been shot through the place from seat to seat. At first the fans were silently amazed at this muscular marvel who seemed to float through the air as easily as they walked on the ground. He leaped onto the ropes, rebounded gracefully—and landed on the shoulders of his startled opponent, who then, against his will, was forced to carry him around the ring, while Rocca chortled and yelled his joy in Spanish. Then—the electricity came through, and all hell broke loose in that arena!

The honor of being the first Rocca victim in New York fell to Benito Gardini, a fellow Italian, who, since retired, says of the experience, "Little did I realize that I was a part of history that night. I didn't have the book on this Latino, so when he started flying at me out of nowhere, I was shocked. First thing I knew he's running toward me—then he disappears and *wham!* I get these big bare feet in my face! Then, when I get up, he gets me in the chest—*wham!* It's like running into a battering ram. Then he jumps onto the ring post. I think he's running away, but no—he comes sailing toward me like a big bird, and the next thing I know I'm carrying him around the ring on my shoulders, with his legs locked around my head so I can hardly breathe. I say to myself this guy can't wrestle—soon's he gets tired I'll kill him. But what does he do? He gets me in a wristlock and damn near kills *me;* the guy can really wrestle!"

At the end, the crowd gave Rocca a standing ovation. In a few thousand homes in the East—these were pre-coaxial cable days—the excitement, while quieter, was just as real, for Rocca looked as good on new-fangled TV screens as he did in the flesh. As the shouts and screams gave promise of what was to come, Toots Mondt smiled in the back of the arena and lit a fresh cigar. "Thar's gold in them feet," he chuckled.

And then, during the interview with TV announcer Dennis James, Antonino Rocca revealed that his presence there was no accident; it was not a case of a talented but mediocre wrestler who happened to think of a gimmick that caught on. No, Tony proved that he had planned the whole thing.

"When I was small boy," he said in the broken English which has since improved immensely, "I decide I would be world champion some day."

"World champion wrestler?" coaxed James, thinking that this was just another interview with a burgeoning star.

"No—world champion *anything,*" insisted Rocca, and James knew it was no ordinary interview. "I knew I would be best at anything I try."

Also, Rocca let the world know, right away, his views on health and physical culture, as well as the enigma of the human mind. "I sleep twelve hourse a day," said young Tony. "Sleep is the most important thing in the world, because without sleep you cannot think. Also, *vitamins* are necessary for the body. You can't have too many. Vitamin C makes you alert, helps you think. I eat dozens of vitamin tablets every day. And when I eat my meals, it may be one, four, eight o'clock, it may be three in the morning if I feel like it. Nature's laws are best—obey them!"

The world soon learned that Antonino Rocca was not just a wrestler, and not just a physical culture nut. From the beginning the animal force that was to make him an international figure shone like a beacon among ordinary men. What began as a wave of worship became a legend.

Single-handed, Rocca picked wrestling up by its bootstraps and made it a paying proposition again. It had languished during the war, and threatened to return to the awful days of the late thirties when it was treated as a joke by even its former fans. Television gave it a boost, but it had to have a star to latch on to—someone to pull it up out of the doldrums—the way Joe Louis pulled boxing out of the squalor of the 1930's, and the way Bob Cousy gave a lift to basketball in the 1940's.

Rocca was that star. No one doubted it the minute he flashed onto the horizon and onto their TV screen. His magnetic personality was that of a leader. The sporting intellectuals, who had for so long looked down upon wrestling without really wanting to, seized upon Rocca as the Messiah of the sport; he was a fellow intellectual, they said—an electrical engineering genius, graduate of an Argentine University, writer of songs (he has written six pretty good ones), lover and patron of the arts (he can discuss everything from Michaelangelo to Picasso with surprising authority); master of five languages—and an articulate representative of the happy marriage

(*continued on page* 67)

Rocca sets foot on American soil for first time, May 1947. Left to right: Nick Elitch, who discovered him, Dr. Karl Sarpolis, Sarpolis' granddaughter and daughter.

BY FRANK THORNTON

ERIC PEDERSEN

Twentieth Century VIKING

Everytime this blond Adonis steps into a ring the glorious tradition of a great people goes with him.

ERIC, THE SON OF PEDER, stood in the bow of the sturdy ship and peered with icy blue eyes toward the horizon. The driving sleet slashed at his hide cape and rattled off his metal breast plate. Behind him, forty stalwart Vikings hauled at the oars in an effort to keep ahead of the piling seas. They had left the coast of Sweden many days ago and now they were lost in a swirling world of white and cold that seemingly had no end.

The men looked up at their captain resentfully. They respected his ability as a sailor, and they admired his strength as a man—but they hated him for leading them to an icy death. Suddenly one of the biggest in the crew, a muscular man who had once killed an ox with a single blow of his fist, rushed from his oar and leaped at the captain.

The Viking turned and, effortlessly, reached out and halted the onrushing sailor dead in his tracks. A fearful *crack!* gave evidence of the force of his blow. Then he picked up the hapless man and flung him full into the faces of the half dozen who tried to follow. They fell in a tangled heap. Now the other men leaped forward, ready to hurl their captain into the frigid sea.

But at that moment there came a clear cry from the bow. *"Land ahead!"*

It broke from the mists then, a dark headland from which shone a friendly light. It was England! Not only had the captain brought the ship to its goal, he did it after only a few weeks of searching.

The unfriendly faces gave way to smiles, the jeers changed to cheers. Eric, son of Peder, returned the smile of his men. He knew that, to be a hero in their eyes, there were times when he must also be a villain.

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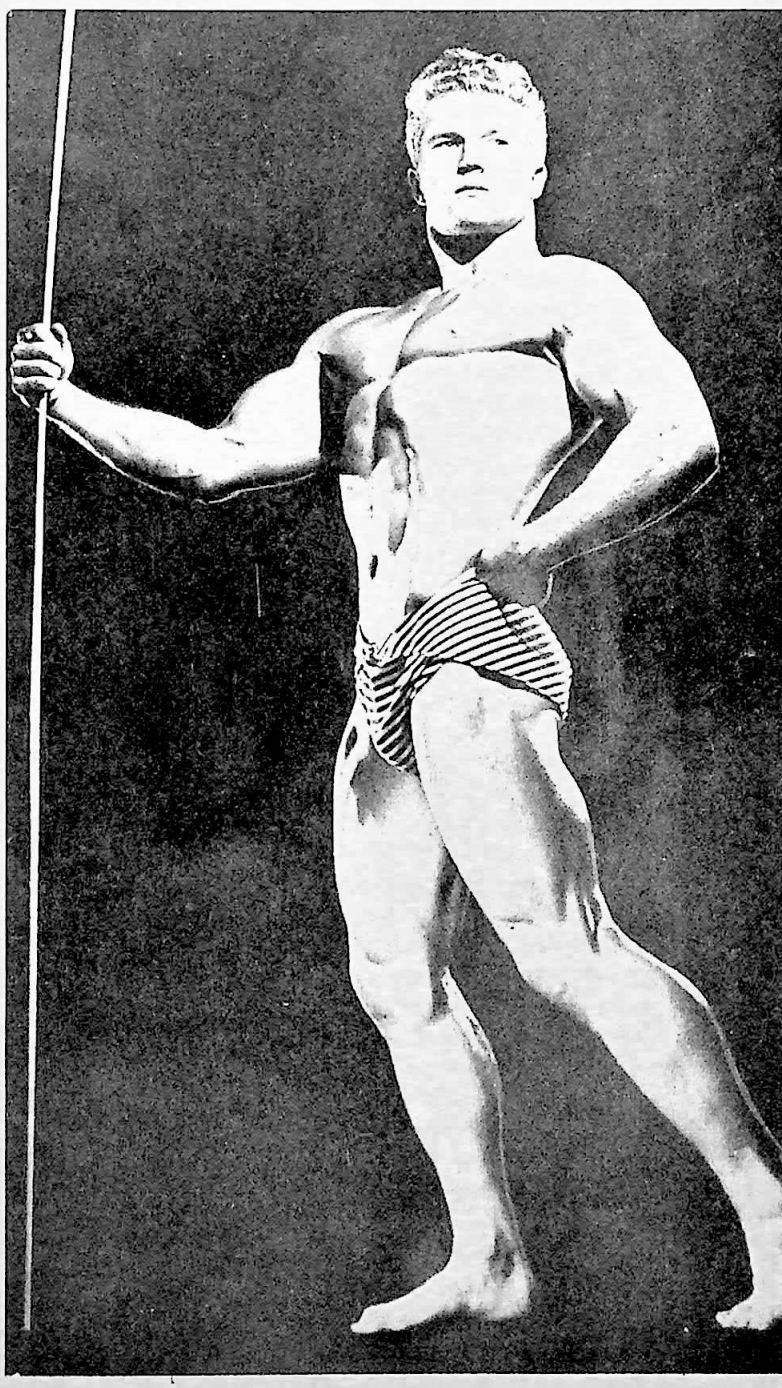


Pedersen when he was acclaimed "World's Most Muscular Man."

One thousand years later Eric Pedersen smiled across a table at a reporter who, fascinated, had listened to the story of his Viking ancestor. "That first Eric was a tough old bird," said the 20th century Eric, "—he had to be in order to survive in his world of strife."

The reporter said, "As a wrestler, you have to be pretty tough to survive in your *own* world of strife. How do you think you two compare—you and Eric the son of Peder? Could you—or most other wrestlers—have stood the gaff in the old days?"

Pedersen, one of the toughest and best-built wrestlers in the world, thought it over for a few seconds. "I think men are men and have not changed since the Viking days —or Cave Man days, for that matter. They still have the same kind of courage and ambition. If a modern man were suddenly transferred back to Viking times, he'd get along the same as if he were still in the 20th Century. That is, if he were strong and brave here, he'd get along all right on that ship of Eric's. And if he were a molly-coddle here, he'd last about five minutes among those tough Vikings!" The handsome blond Nordic grinned engagingly. "Me? I think I'd do all right on a Viking ship. If old Peder's son, Eric, got tough with me, I'd give him a judo chop, a knee in the gut and an elbow in the jaw—and toss him into the ocean. It worked on guys like Killer Kowalski, Dick the Bruiser and the Baillargeons—and they're as tough as any *two* Vikings!"

The 220-pound Pedersen speaks with the authority of one who has wrestled the best in the business over the last 12 years. In his mid-thirties, he has satisfied an ambition he has had since childhood. In fact, Eric is the *only* wrestler we know who always wanted to be a wrestler!

Most wrestlers take up their lucrative (if they're good) profession after giving up teaching school, paleontology, running a lathe, repairing TV sets, brain surgery or similar jobs. But not Eric Pedersen. The six-foot-one-incher from Santa Anna, California, made up his mind to be a wrestler at the age of 15. (He didn't make it; he had to wait till he was 22.)

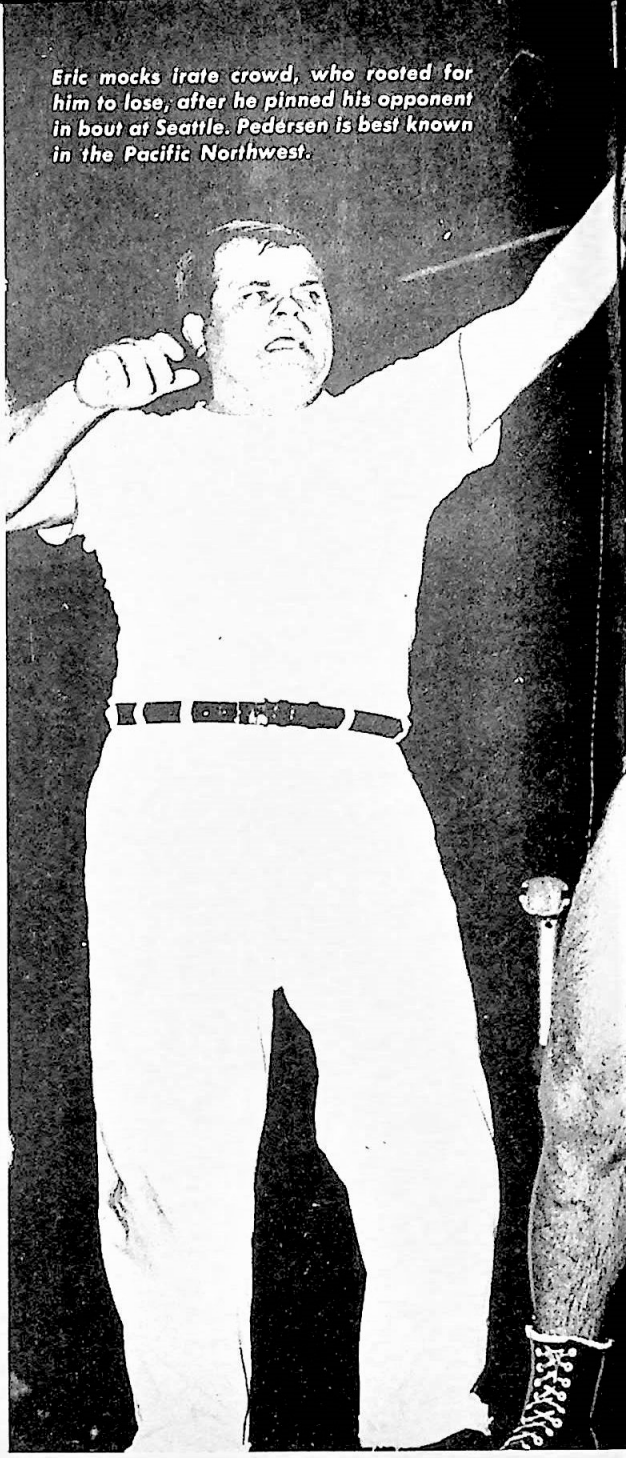
"As soon as I knew what I wanted," admits the hulking bruiser who, at the beginning of his career, was officially recognized as "The Most Muscular Man In the World," "I went after it. Not once did I let outside ambitions get me off the track toward my goal."

It is a rather dramatic story, almost as dramatic as the story of old Peder's son's cruise across the North Sea so long ago. It begins with the day 15-year-old Eric, a handsome boy, was set upon by a gang of the town bullies while he was on his way to a birthday party. The toughs messed him up, harassed his girl friend and, in general, made it a day to remember.

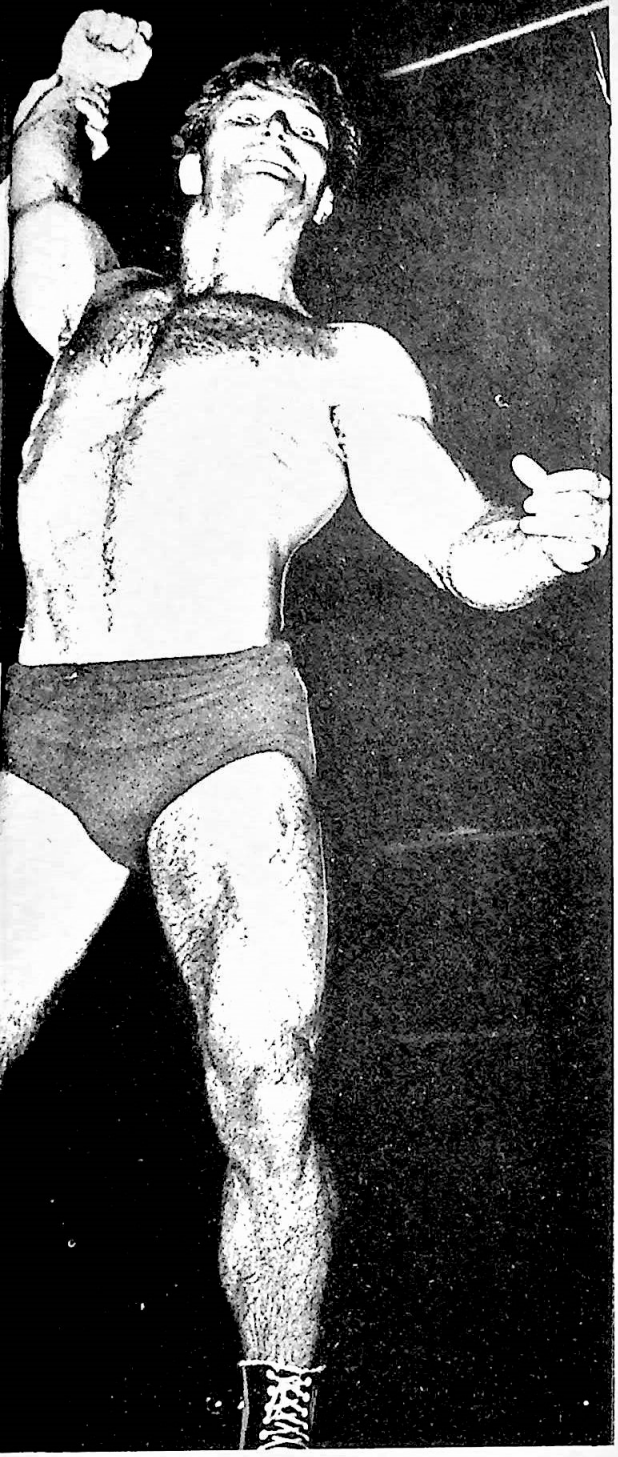
Eric also remembered each of the wise guys involved. He went home and stood in front of a full-length mirror. Today he recalls, "I had just seen Errol Flynn in one of those blood-and-thunder pictures, and I was inspired. I said to myself, I'm a descendant of the Vikings; am I going to let those characters walk over me—or do I do something about it? Then I took a second look and I realized there was nothing much I could do about it—unless I got some muscles. So I ordered a set of bar bells the next day. I also went to the gym and started taking my first boxing and wrestling lessons."

It took him two years to achieve the desired results. By that time he was husky and handsome. Also, he still had the same girl friend. One weekend he had himself a ball, as he tells it. "I took this girl around town and we looked up each one of the four bullies who had roughed us up two years earlier. I'm sure she enjoyed it as much as I did. As I faced each one, I told him what I was going to do and why—although they already knew, I'm sure. Then I let them have it. I made sure they needed a doctor when I left them lying in the gutter."

Eric Pedersen's steely eyes twinkled. "That was seventeen years ago. About six years after I turned pro wrestler, one of those guys—the biggest, meanest and toughest—looked me up after a match. He had grown into a very ordinary guy, soft, weak, sickly. But when he shook my hand he was happy. He said, 'Eric, I want to



Eric mocks irate crowd, who rooted for him to lose, after he pinned his opponent in bout at Seattle. Pedersen is best known in the Pacific Northwest.



thank you for the beating you gave me that day. I was on the way to being a no-good roughneck, a real delinquent. When I saw what a decent guy like you could do, it made me stop and think. I didn't get any bar bells or muscles—but I got my self-respect. If it hadn't been for you, I could've gone bad.' "

Eric looked around at the other wrestlers who filled the dressing room. "Something tells me I haven't helped *these* guys much. They're still a bunch of slobs." He said it loud enough for them all to hear. They turned and grinned at us. They obviously liked and respected Eric Pedersen, one of the toughest among them.

There's good reason for this respect. In the twelve years he's been a pro, Pedersen has established himself as one of the real *men* of wrestling—from the standpoint of the wrestlers themselves. He asks no quarter and offers none when in the ring. And since his mobile features lend themselves to a wealth of expression, he has earned the hatred of the fans by the faces he makes. They call him "Pretty Boy," and they love to taunt and jeer at him. But he jeers right back, posing and flexing his muscles with abandon.

The muscles are probably the best in wrestling. "The muscles came first—it was in line with my program," says Eric. "I decided to make myself the strongest man in the world—before I became a wrestler. Well, I never quite made it—but I came close. In 1947 I won the Mr. California and Mr. Pacific Coast titles. I entered the Mr. America contest that year. Guess who just beat me out? Steve Reeves, the famous Hercules of the movies! Next year I tried for Mr. Universe and got short-changed again—but I won the 'World's Most Muscular Man' title. It was close enough to my goal. I turned wrestler the next year."

From the beginning Pedersen established his own brand of wrestling, and hasn't changed it since. When people pay to see him wrestle they know they'll be thrilled, either at the sight of Pedersen or his opponent, being creamed. Nobody comes off scott free when the modern Viking is in there.

How he goes on and on, year after year, at his supersonic pace has caused doctor to wonder. Unlike Danny McShane and other mortal wrestlers who bleed and suffer throughout their career, Pedersen seems to be impervious to injury. He bleeds, all right, but only from head wounds which quickly heal. His only injuries seem superficial and most of them are inflicted by the fans with pop bottles, beer cans, cigar butts, jagged handbags and hatpins.

"It's an occupational hazard," says Eric fatalistically. So far I haven't been badly stabbed—so maybe I'll finish my career still in good health."

Finish? When?

"Not for a long time. I'm still as healthy as the day I started—and a lot more durable. I've toughened a lot. Before, I could feel the hot cigar butts hitting against my back; now they feel like ant stings. I just ignore them."

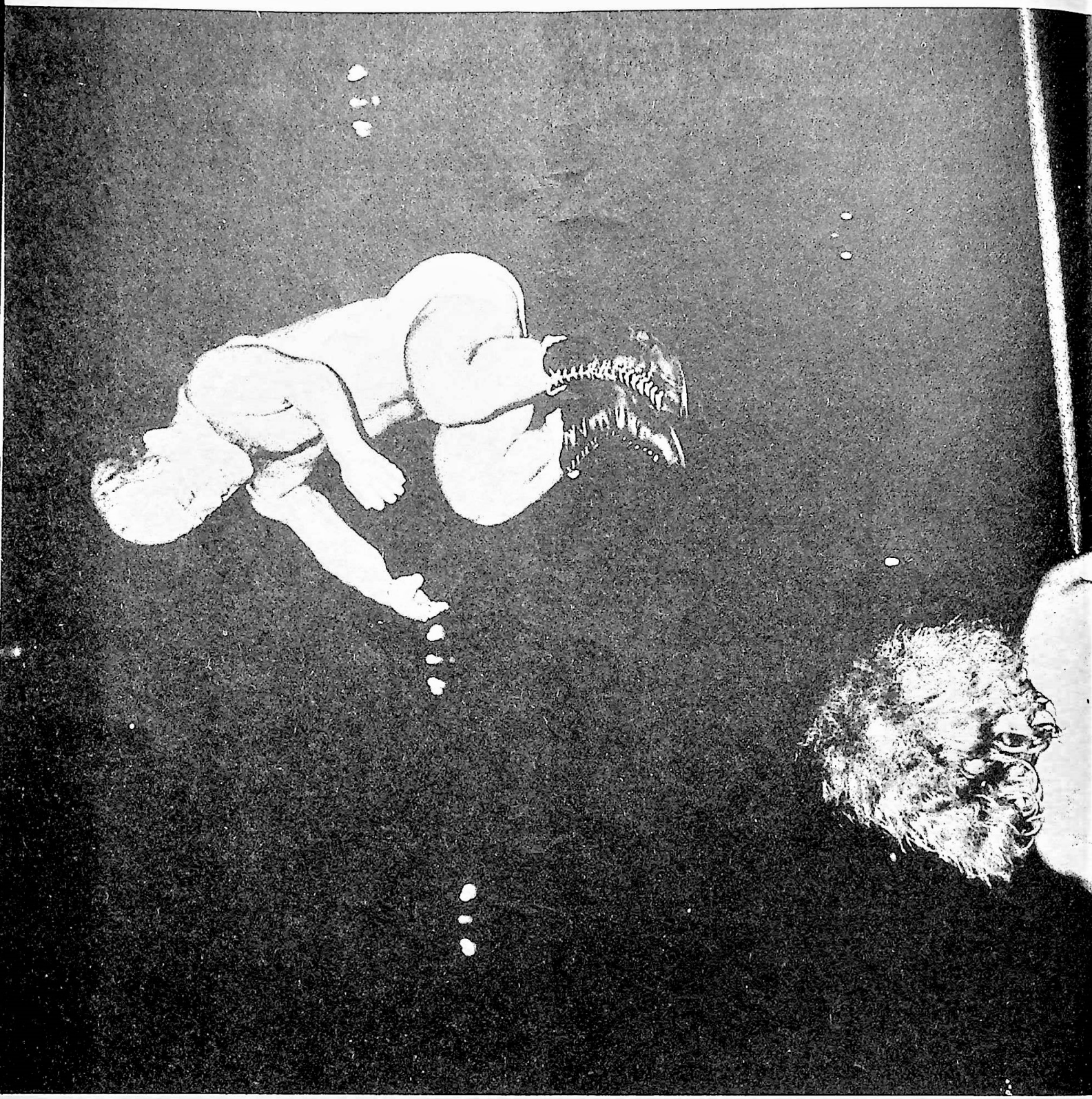
There may be a reason why more bodily harm has not come to Eric—from the fans, that is. They secretly admire him. They scoff and jeer, yes, but there seems to be a kind of humorous tolerance to it.

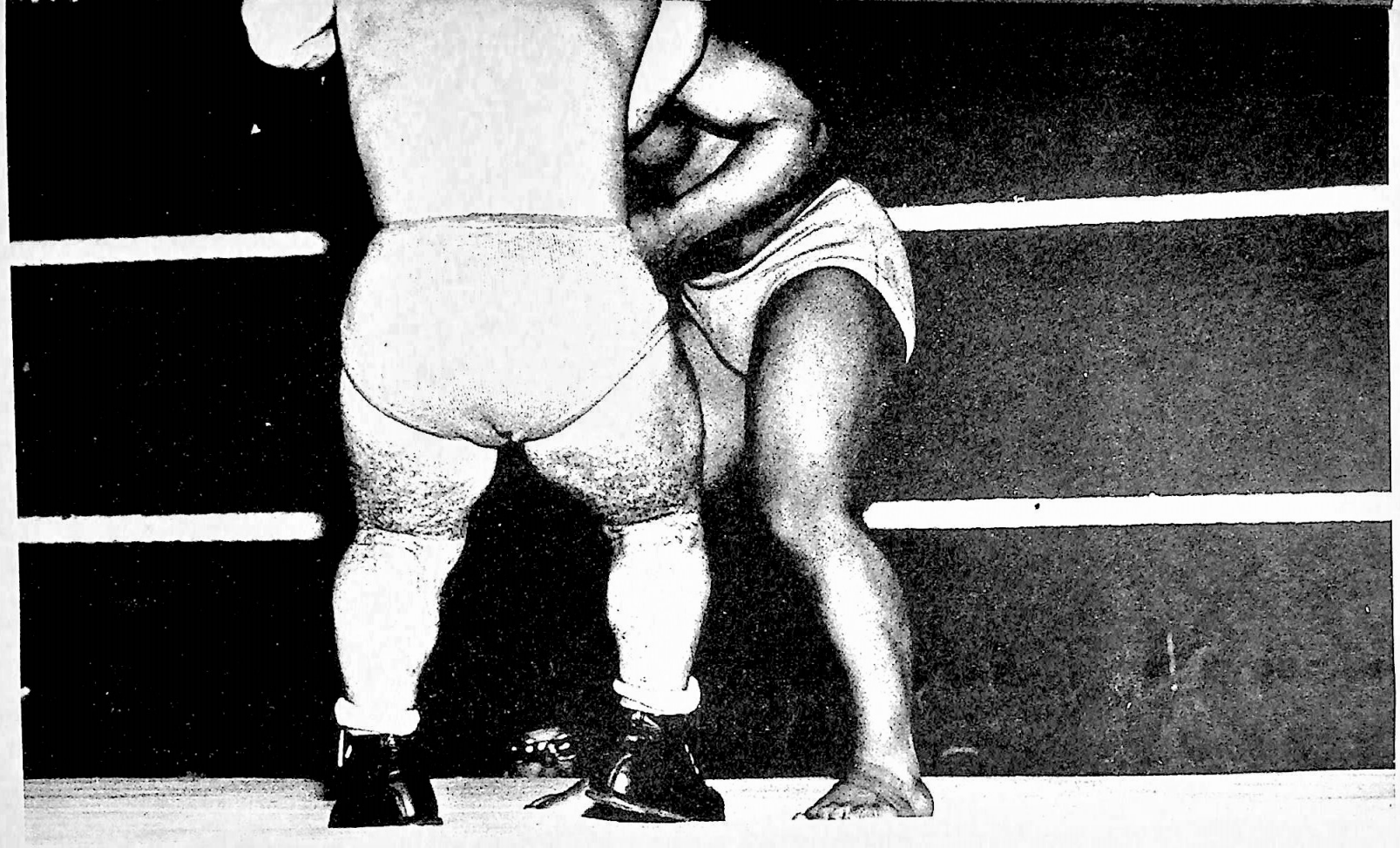
"I really think they like me," says Eric with a grin, "although they wouldn't admit it in a million years. I don't care—they annoy me sometime, but—well, I kind of like them, too." He shook his head and frowned. "Don't write that, though! I'd never live it down!"

(Okay, Eric—we won't breathe a word.)

And so, a thousand years after his Norse ancestors showed that he was not only a wise leader but a man among men, Eric Pedersen has emerged as a worthy standard bearer and namesake of a great hero. However, Eric Pedersen is no hero—he's one of the most atrocious villains alive—but nobody minds, least of all the fans who throng to watch his villainy night after night. The thrill that comes to them is nameless, somehow unexplainable.

We think it may be the rekindled spark that has been flung across a stormy ocean and a thousand years—to Eric Pedersen from Eric, son of Peder the Viking. •





COMPACT ASTRONAUT

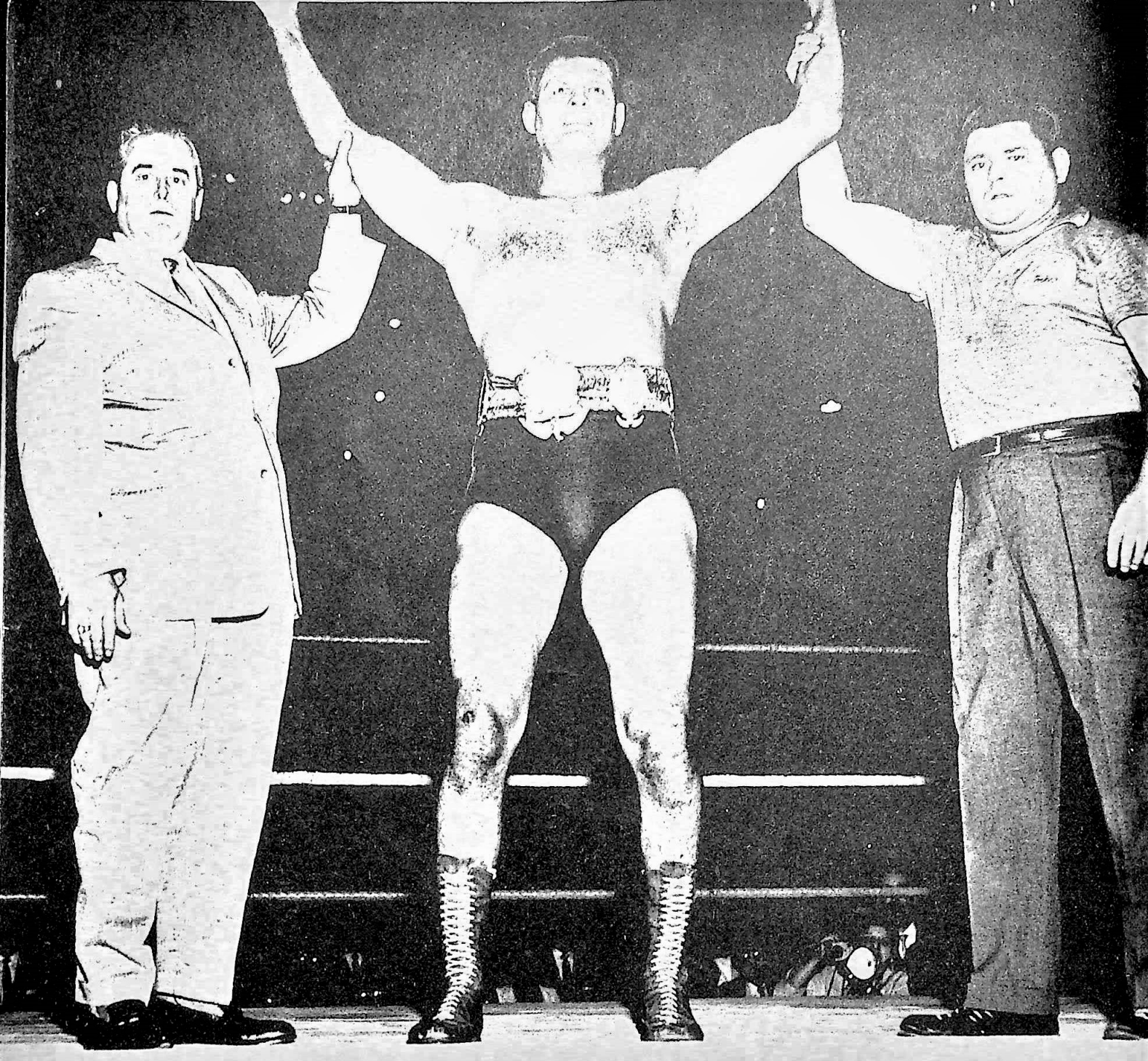
SKY LOW LOW AND AN 8-INCH NAVAL PROJECTILE weigh about the same — and they act the same when aimed at the enemy. Sky Low Low recently aimed his bullet head at the enemy, represented by another explosive, midget-sized bundle of dynamite named Fuzzy Cupid. What happened shouldn't happen to invaders from outer space. Here's what led up to the detonation:

Pint-sized tough guys Cupid and Pee Wee James were pitted against pint-sized good guys Sky Low Low and Brown Panther in a recent tag team bout at Boston. The match had been going about ten minutes when shock-headed Fuzzy Cupid fancied himself highly insulted by Brown Panther. Actually, all Panther said was, "Why you dirty———!" Which, you will admit, is a pretty harmless statement. But Fuzzy was so offended that he grabbed Panther by the throat and began strangling him. Slowly Pather's face started to change a variety of colors. That's when the stricken man's partner, Sky Low Low, whipped into action. He catapulted his compact 95-pounds into the air, Astronaut fashion, and after a ten foot flight (without oxygen) made a crash landing on Fuzzy's fuzzy head.

For some reason, the match came to an abrupt end at this point, mainly because Cupid was out cold and Pee Wee James collapsed from fright. Pee Wee apparently figured that when the enemy started launching guided missiles, a mis-guided wrestler had mistakenly been carried to the launching pad.

An alert WRESTLING REVUE photographer caught this remarkable shot of Astronaut Low as he began his descent from the stratosphere to the target. •

PHOTO BY LANZA



The enormous arms of Kowalski are raised in victory after he almost murdered his opponent during savage Montreal bout.

TRUE PORTRAIT OF THE KILLER

BY STEVE WHALEY

It is a strange paradox that so little is really known about one of the world's most famous wrestlers

WLADEK "KILLER" KOWALSKI, the 34-year old son of Polish immigrants, has parlayed his enormous strength and burning lust for victory into a $100,000 a year income—and the title "Canada's Most Unpopular Athlete."

But underneath that ferocious exterior is an extremely sensitive man with a soul as fragile as bone china. Wladek subscribes to the "I am" philosophy of Saint Germain, wears purple tights, purple socks and purple shoes into the ring because that color has great religious significance. His magnificent home in suburban Montreal emphasizes white furnishings because white symbolizes purity.

He is a food fanatic who never eats meat and survives on fruits, vegetables, spaghetti and a secret dish originated by ancient Buddhist monks. "All one can hope to get out of his body depends on what he puts in," said Kowalski as he dug his teeth into a big red apple.

The Killer, as he is known to wrestling fans throughout the world, receives about a thousand letters a week, 80% of them abusive. But he has learned, after ten years, to "understand people." The only thing that makes him bristle with indignation is when someone suggests that the outcome of wrestling matches might be influenced by the contestants at the behest of promoters. His own gnarled exterior, The Killer insists, is living proof that wrestling is strictly on the up and up and that it is a business in which only *real* men can possibly survive.

Kowalski's massive (6′ 7″-265 pounds) body is a maze of old scars, new scars, welts and bruises. His generous nose is twisted from being sawed back and forth across the ropes. Cauliflower ears impair his hearing, a terrible affliction for one with so deep an appreciation of good music. Twice his rib cage was smashed and the ligaments in his knees have been torn again and again. The thousands of crashing falls on the mat have left his elbows looking like door knobs.

"Just because I get over-enthused about my work people hate me," moaned Kowalski. "Everywhere I go they throw chairs, newspapers, cigar butts, fruit and anything else they can grab. I have been burned, knifed, blinded by pea shooters and hit over the head with boards. Once in New York a woman they call Hatpin Mary shoved a long pin into my rear end.

"I suppose," continued Wladek, "that I am a symbol of something or other. But there is some good in it, because it is impossible for anybody to scream for my blood without expelling some internal poison of his own. The man who starts his letters to me with 'Dear Stinker' and then proceeds to call me every vile name he can think of, is less apt to take it out on his wife and kids.

"And I'd say that a woman who screams herself hoarse at a wrestler enjoys greater domestic tranquility than one who affords herself no such outlet."

For a dedicated bachelor that is quite a statement.

In 1954, anti-Kowalski feeling reached a new low, and gate receipts hit a new high in Montreal, when The Killer *accidentally* ripped an ear from Yukon Eric's head during a bout at the Forum.

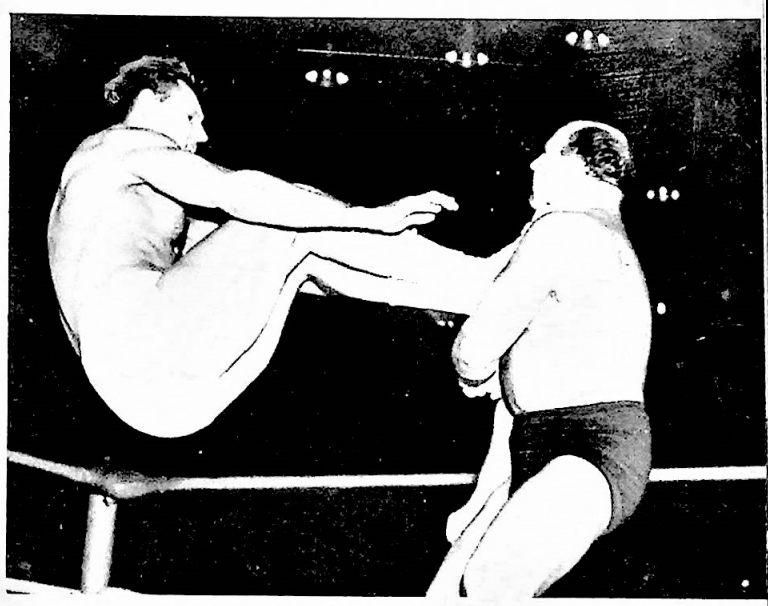
From the top rope Kowalski leaped on his prostrate opponent and the sharp heel of his new shoe caught Eric's cauliflower ear, hard and brittle after years of having it twisted and pounded in the ring.

As the heel grazed Eric's head and pinned his ear to the mat, Eric tried to twist free. The ear, as though in a vise, parted from the victim's noggin.

Wladek fought his way from the ring through hostile crowds amid a thunderous blending of boos and the wail of an abulance siren. When he returned to the Forum the following week he found a record crowd of 14,657 highly incensed fans demanding that his opponent of the evening sever both ears from his head. As you might have guessed, this bout produced no untoward incident.

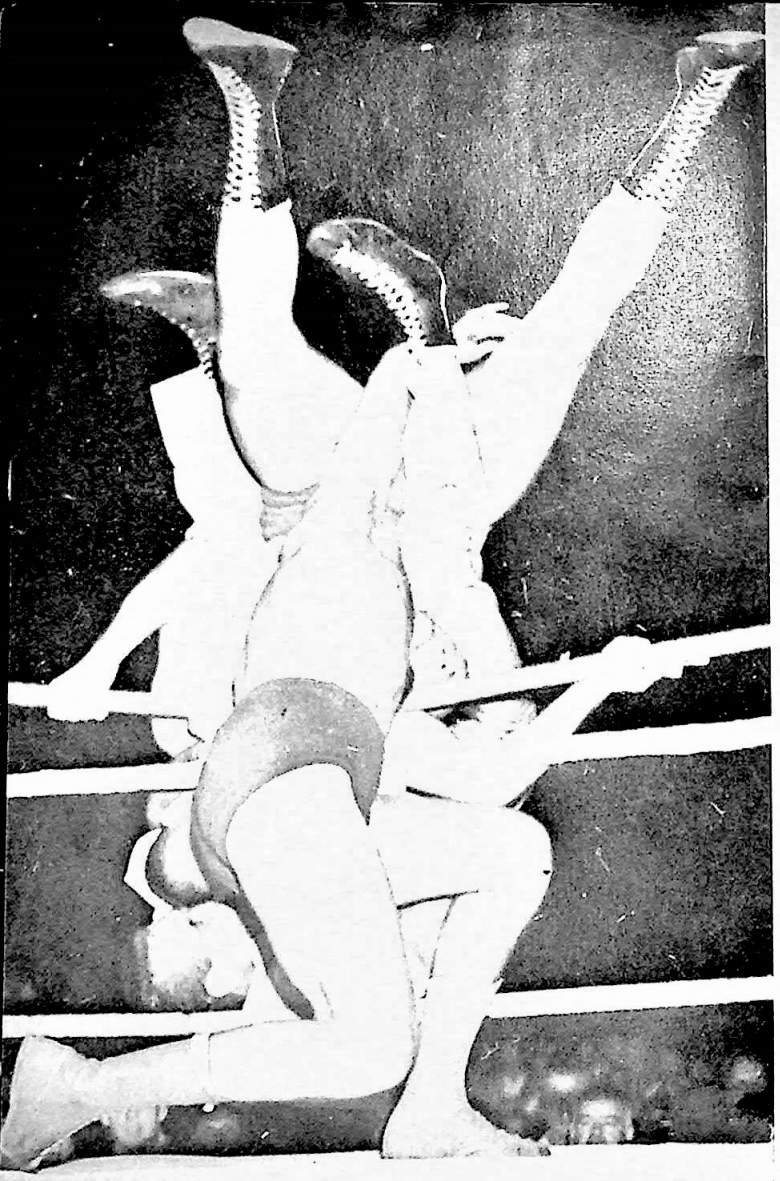
To make sure that some maniac, whose animosity exceeds the bounds of accepted behaviorism, doesn't shoot him, Kowalski keeps his traveling plans secret.

Every year he travels about 100,000 miles by air, about 25,000 by automobile. Three years ago, after a show in Montreal, he was driving to Ottawa for another engagement. Suddenly, out of a gray mist a huge truck loomed in his path. Kowalski slammed on his brakes and frantically turned the wheel. He was too late. There was



Extremely agile for a man his size, the Killer plants perfect dropkick on tough Hard Boiled Haggarty in 1959 Boston match.

Kowalski squirms in pain as Johnny Valentine applies pressure to "Cobra Twist." The Killer broke free by gouging Valentine.



With one great heave Kowalski flips both his opponent, Gene Kiniski, and the referee, big Mike Mazurki, out of Montreal ring.

a terrific crash and Kowalski was pulled from the twisted wreckage, suffering severe shoulder and head injuries.

"A lesser man would not have survived," said the doctor who treated him at Montreal's Royal Victoria Hospital. "What saved him was his superb resilience. And what amazed us was his diet. He spurned hospital food and ordered his room filled with stalks of bananas on which he nibbled constantly."

Five years ago, during an ill-advised year long diet experiment, Kowalski shed 100 pounds, trimming to a skinny 170. At his low point, when he was eating nothing but apples and grapes, it was freely predicted in sports circles that his wrestling days were over. Indeed he did quit wrestling, bought a jewelry store and, according to friends, lost about $60,000.

On the verge of bankruptcy, Kowalski appraised his sad state and in the following 66 days, tamping down vast quantities of fruit juices, vegetables and wheat germ, gained 85 pounds. To turn this new poundage into muscle he trained daily in a Montreal gymnasium.

Kowalski never goes to bed before two or three o'clock in the morning, often after an airplane flight or an orange juice drinking session in a night club. His breakfast, at noon, consists of three substantial glasses of orange juice laced with gobs of natural honey.

When he is in Montreal he frequently eats dinner at Mother Martin's, a favorite rendezvous on Windsor Street where the "Kowalski Salad" was created especially for him by solicitous chefs. It consists simply of fresh vegetables in a tremendous bowl—enough to serve a family of four.

Kowalski generally follows his salad with a hot vegetable plate, avoiding asparagus and spinach. Far from being influenced by the Popeye tradition, the big wrestler blames cooked spinach for a good deal of childhood ills. He says cooking takes all the good out of the plant and maintains that if mothers stopped forcing it down their children's throats the youngsters would enjoy much better health.

The Killer lives in a magnificent $40,000 home in the Montreal suburb of Cote St. Luc with his brother, Stanley, and Stanley's wife. A married sister, Wanda, lives in Windsor, where Wladek was born 32 years ago and where his parents still reside.

Series of pictures at right show typical Kowalski techniques. Far right and center: Killer knee drops champion Pat O'Connor. Near right: Kowalski, right, goes to work on the popular Johnny Rougeau even before bout begins.

A renowned amateur photographer, whose advice is often sought by professional cameramen, Kowalski has a lavish darkroom in his home. He has taken thousands of pictures but has never sold one. "If I sold a picture, I'd be a commercial photographer," he says with a grin, "and I want to keep photography strictly a hobby."

Although most of his furniture is white, one huge, overstuffed living room chair, in which he likes to sit and meditate, is purple, matching the color of Jesus' robes in the painting on the wall.

"I'd wear a purple suit if I thought I wouldn't be considered an oddball," said Kowalski.

According to Eddie Quinn, the Montreal wrestling and boxing impresario and Kowalski's booking agent, The Killer's preference for purple stems from inborn religious convictions.

"Kowalski believes purple gives him inner strength," said Quinn. "At one time he wanted to be a priest. He was unhappy and groping. Then he read a lot of philosophy and metaphysics and embraced a cult called 'I am,' which believes in silent prayer, hard work and quiet living."

Kowalski, who never associates with other wrestlers except in the ring, is inclined to be extremely moody. Even in a room full of people, he'll sit, wrapped in his own thoughts, scarcely uttering a word. He seldom tells a joke but he does have an elastic sense of humor which permits him to laugh at the offerings of others. He never uses profanity and when those in his presence do, he quietly leaves the room.

"He doesn't act like a celebrity," complains Norman Olson, a Montreal public relations man who is friendly with the Killer. "He likes to be alone too much. He'll fly to New York and call Quinn at two or three o'clock in the morning to say that he arrived safely. He's a tolerant guy. He never tries to force his views on anybody."

Quinn says: "Don't forget, we have to be tolerant with him, too. Let's face it, we don't understand him—but we sure like him."

Some of Kowalski's voluminous mail comes from women and is of the mash note variety. Few wrestlers bother to answer the drivel that finds its way in feminine scrawls onto paper ranging from cheap pads to the expensive perfumed stationery sold only in the best shops.

Kowalski used to follow up some letters purely as a private study of psychology. But he concluded his research when he discovered to his disappointment that most of those who fill letters with romantic promises have few appealing qualities with which to support them.

Some of his nicest letters come from youngsters who have seen him on television.

"I suppose everyone is good in a child's eyes," the big wrestler said. "A child hasn't learned to hate. I'm always getting trophies and plaques from body-building groups and I give them away to the kids in the neighborhood just to see their faces light up."

Kowalski wasn't always the massive hunk of rippling muscle and hard flesh he is today. At the age of 14 he suffered from a heart ailment. Stoop-shouldered, six-foot-

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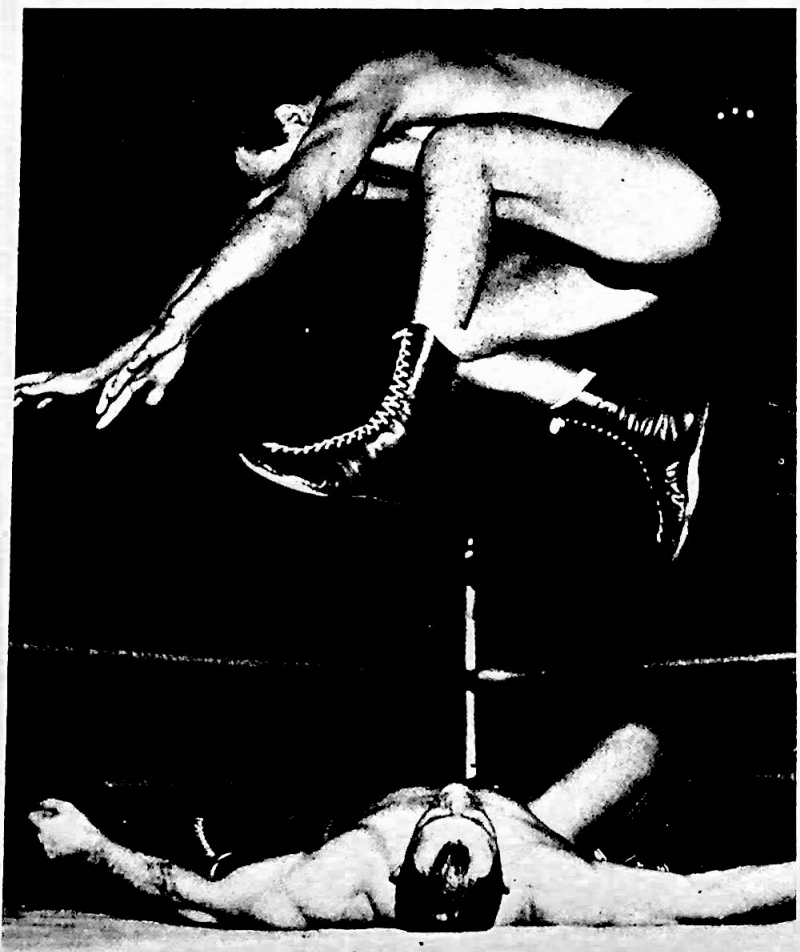
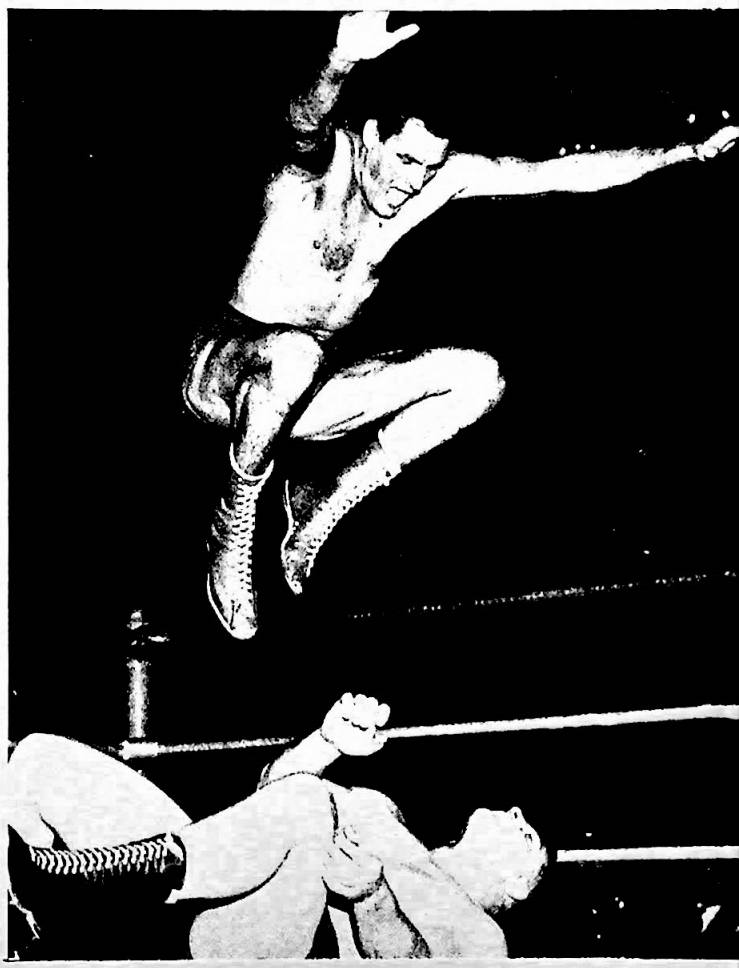
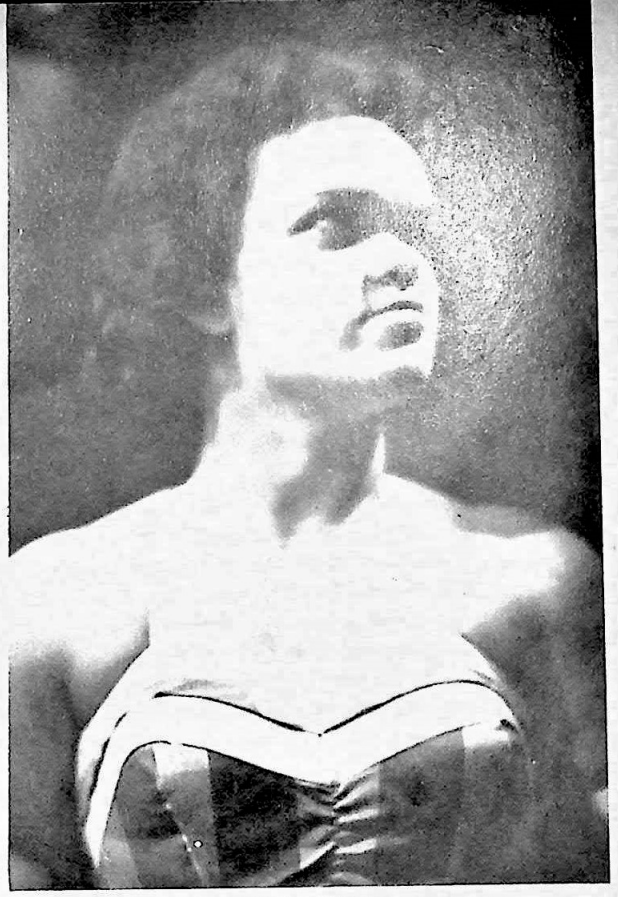




BY JANE McCARTY

What was behind that bruising mixed-match in Charlotte, North Carolina?

A Wrestling Revue reporter was on the scene to get the story.

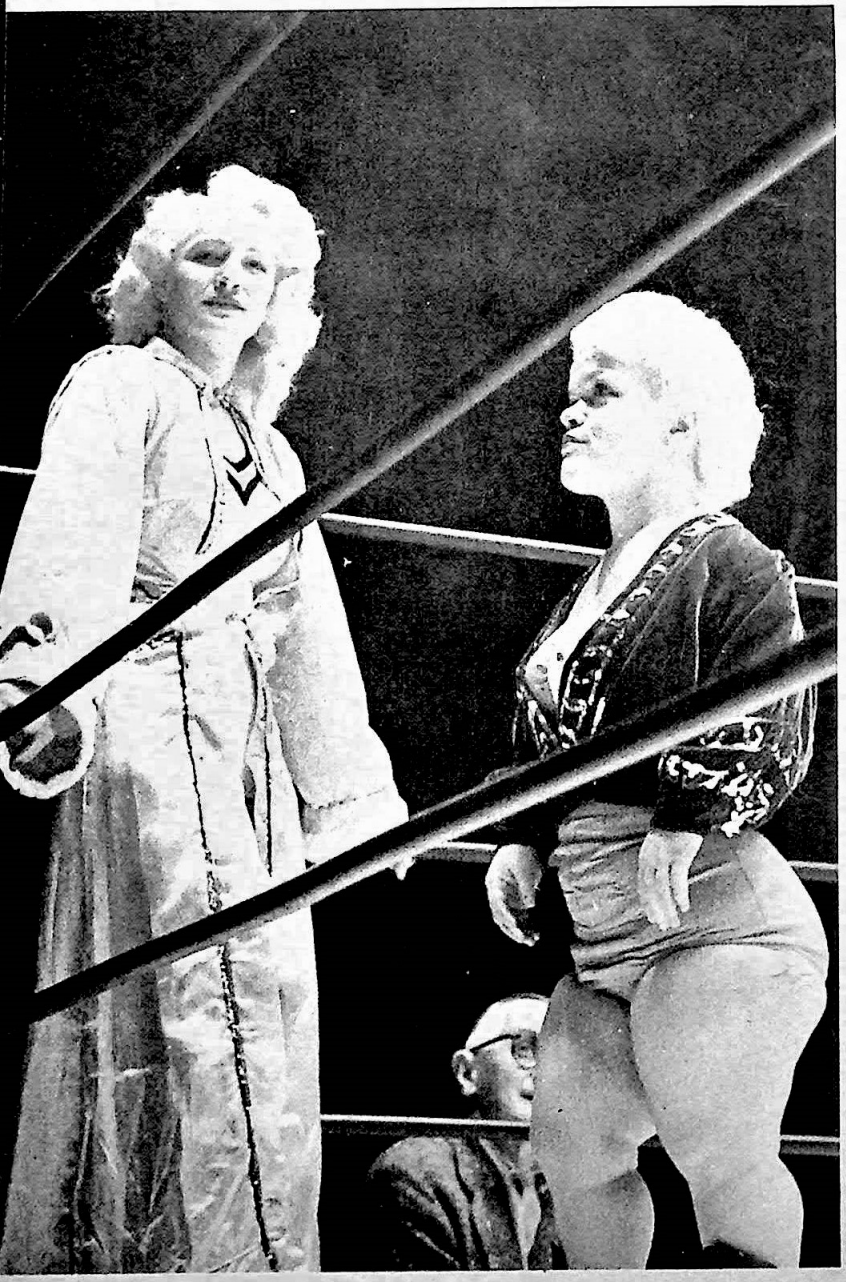


BABY CHERYL

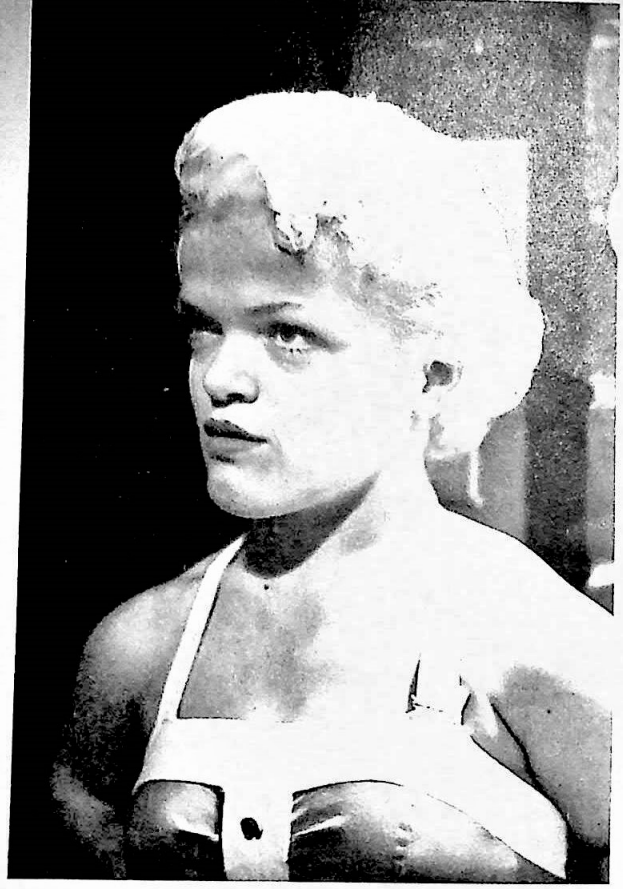
THE BIG and OF A GIRL

ADVICE ON HOW TO START A RIOT: 1. Trip an old lady as she's about to cross the street. 2. Stand in front of the U.N. Building with a bottle marked "Acid". 3. Put on a wrestling match between two midgets and two grownups, *female* variety.

When the South's leading impresario of lady wrestling, Buddy Lee, tried number three in Charlotte, North Carolina recently, he almost regretted it. What actually happened was, he matched a blonde tag team composed of Judy Grable and Darling Dagmar, against a brunette team made up of Rita Cortez and Baby Cheryl — and trusted to luck and his own discipline. The luck wasn't so good but the discipline worked beautifully.



The team of Judy Grable, left, and midget star Darling Dagmar listen happily to the excited cheers before bout.



DARLING DAGMAR

little THRILLS MAT WAR

This reporter, before the match, went into the dressing room to interview the contestants. Because of a lack of facilities (one dressing room was being rebuilt) all four girls were in the same small room. The air down there was like a mine full of carbon monoxide; it seemed that the red-hot stares of the girls might be enough to ignite it.

The spark was set off when Baby Cheryl, 80 pounds of meanness when faced by someone she has to beat, just "happened" to trip little Darling Dagmar. What a picture it would have made — when Darling Dagmar struck back! Since no love was lost between the two full-size girls, Judy and Rita, they let the little ones slug it out.

Buddy Lee didn't. Hearing the ruckus from the corridor outside, he rushed in and picked up the two she-cats by the scruff of their necks and yanked them off the floor, where they dangled, kicking and caterwauling. (A rough-tough wrestler himself, Lee is capable of holding out 80 pounds of squirming female in each hand.)

"Now," he said in a disarmingly gentle voice, and he included the two big girls in his advice, "If this keeps up, I'll hold up your pay. See!"

(continued on next page)

Standing stone-faced in their corner, the team of Rita Cortez, left, and Baby Cheryl, try to ignore the jeers.

Grable, right, pursues Rita Cortez who makes a mad dash back to her corner where she tagged partner Baby Cheryl.

Cortez, top, is raised high by Grable in body scissors and . . . . . .

. . . . . slammed down to the floor with terrific impact, knocking the wind out of villainess Cortez.

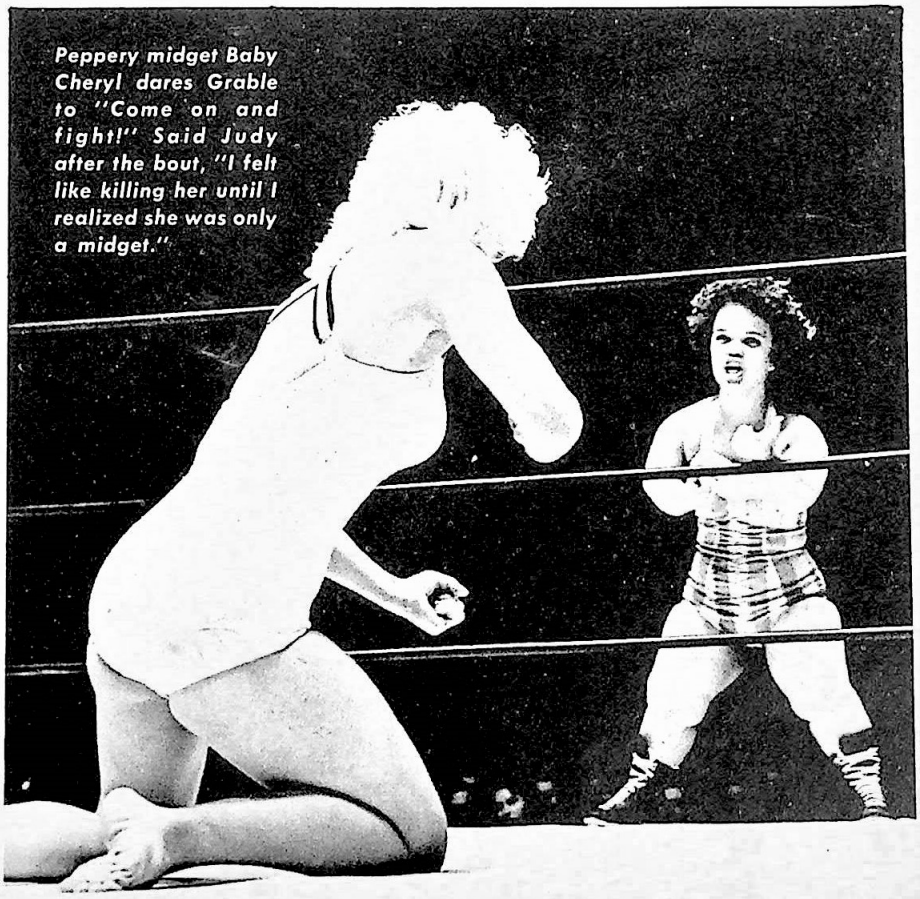
Despite the hammerlock Cortez holds on her, Grable makes tag on partner Dagmar.

The kicking subsided. Both little ones were lowered not too gently to the floor. "Now, again," continued Buddy, "— when you get into that ring, I want one thing understood. Either the midgets are in there *or* you big girls! At no time do I want to see a midget and a grownup mixup — understand? Otherwise, you'll *all* be disqualified!"

He meant it and they knew it. Meekly, all four girls nodded as Buddy left the stuffy dressing room.

All the meekness vanished when they got into the ring, but Billy's discipline stuck. It was one of the roughest matches ever seen in Charlotte, bar none. But it was also one of the fairest. When it was over, the fans gave out with a standing ovation.

Heroically, as was fitting, Judy Grable and her little helpmate, Dagmar, won it. I was as glad as the fans to see it. After all, *I* knew how the match had really started — down in the dressing room about an hour before.



Peppery midget Baby Cheryl dares Grable to "Come on and fight!" Said Judy after the bout, "I felt like killing her until I realized she was only a midget."

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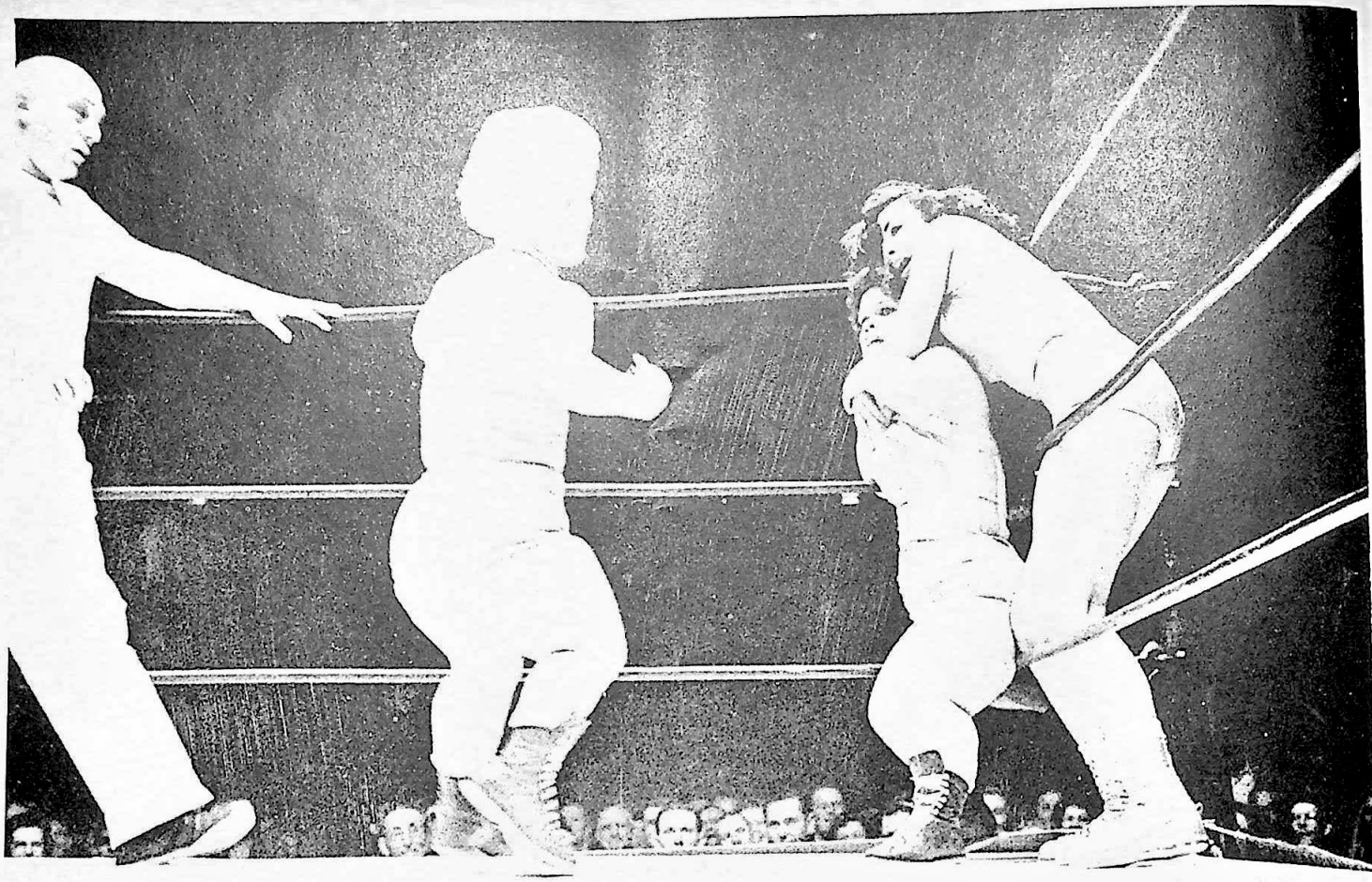
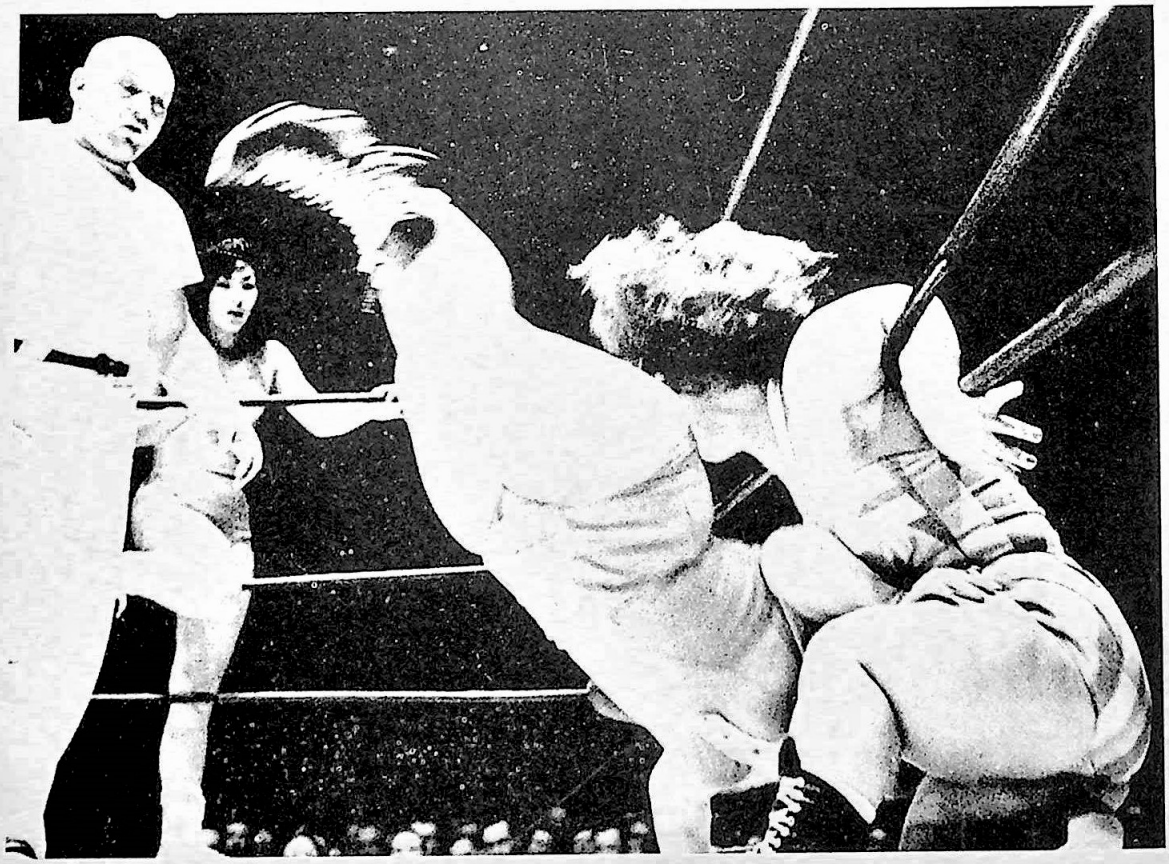
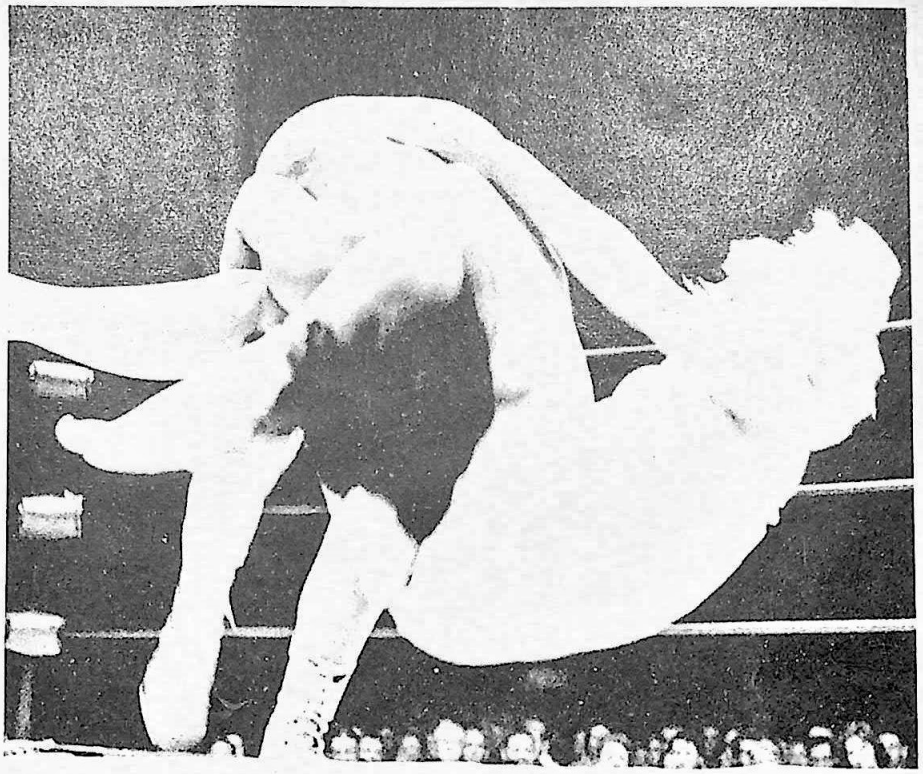
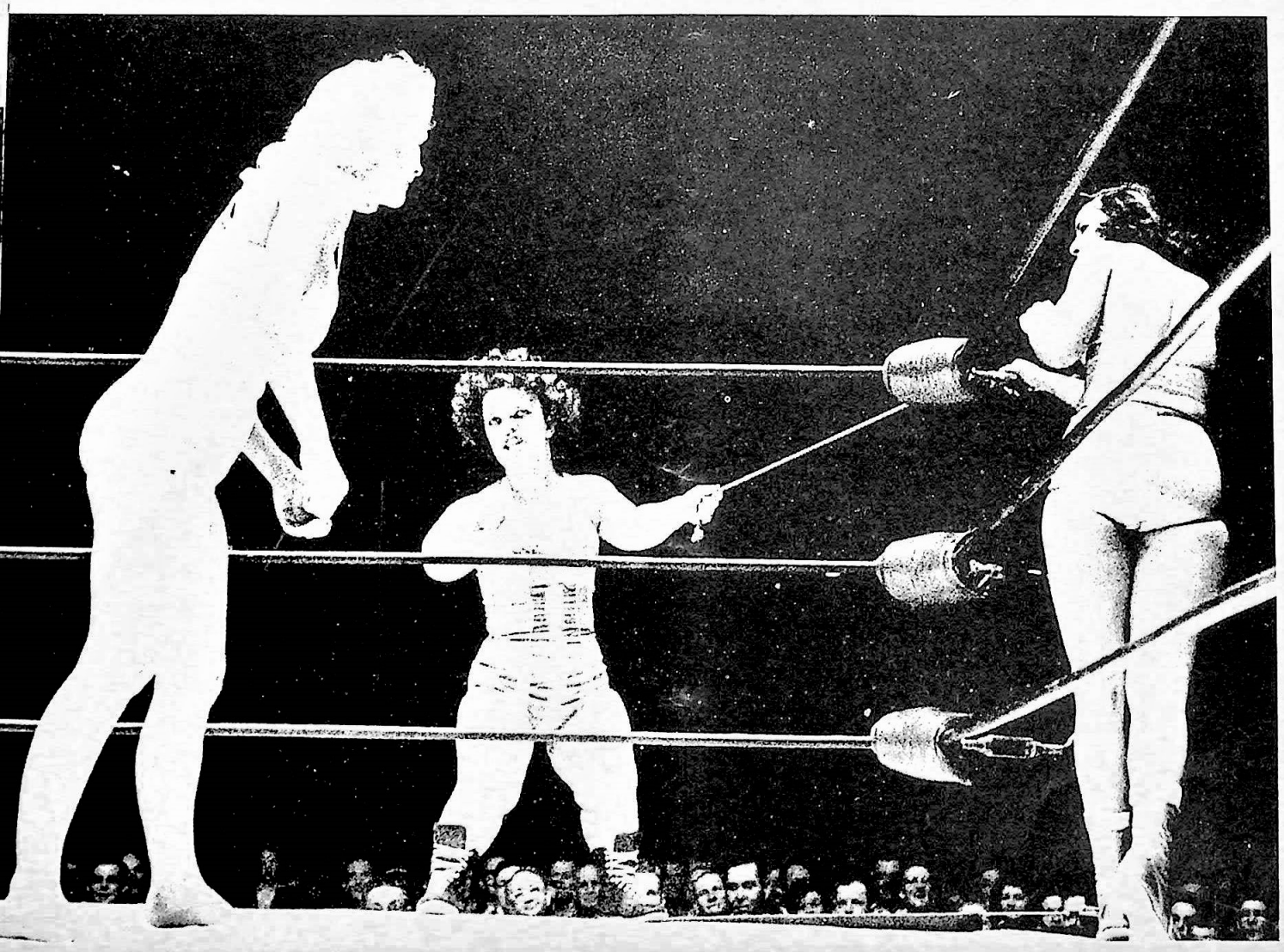




Top: Cortez, outside ring, tries to protect Baby Cheryl from the charging Darling Dagmar. Left: Dagmar's head seems to be lost in Cheryl's body as she leaps at Baby in an attempt to knock her out.

Right: Beautiful flying head scissors by Grable brings Cortez down hard on the mat just before the team of Grable and Dagmar won the contest. Below: Cortez dashes outside ring to get away from the attacking Judy. Cheryl, center, does her vocal best to help Rita, but Grable didn't scare.

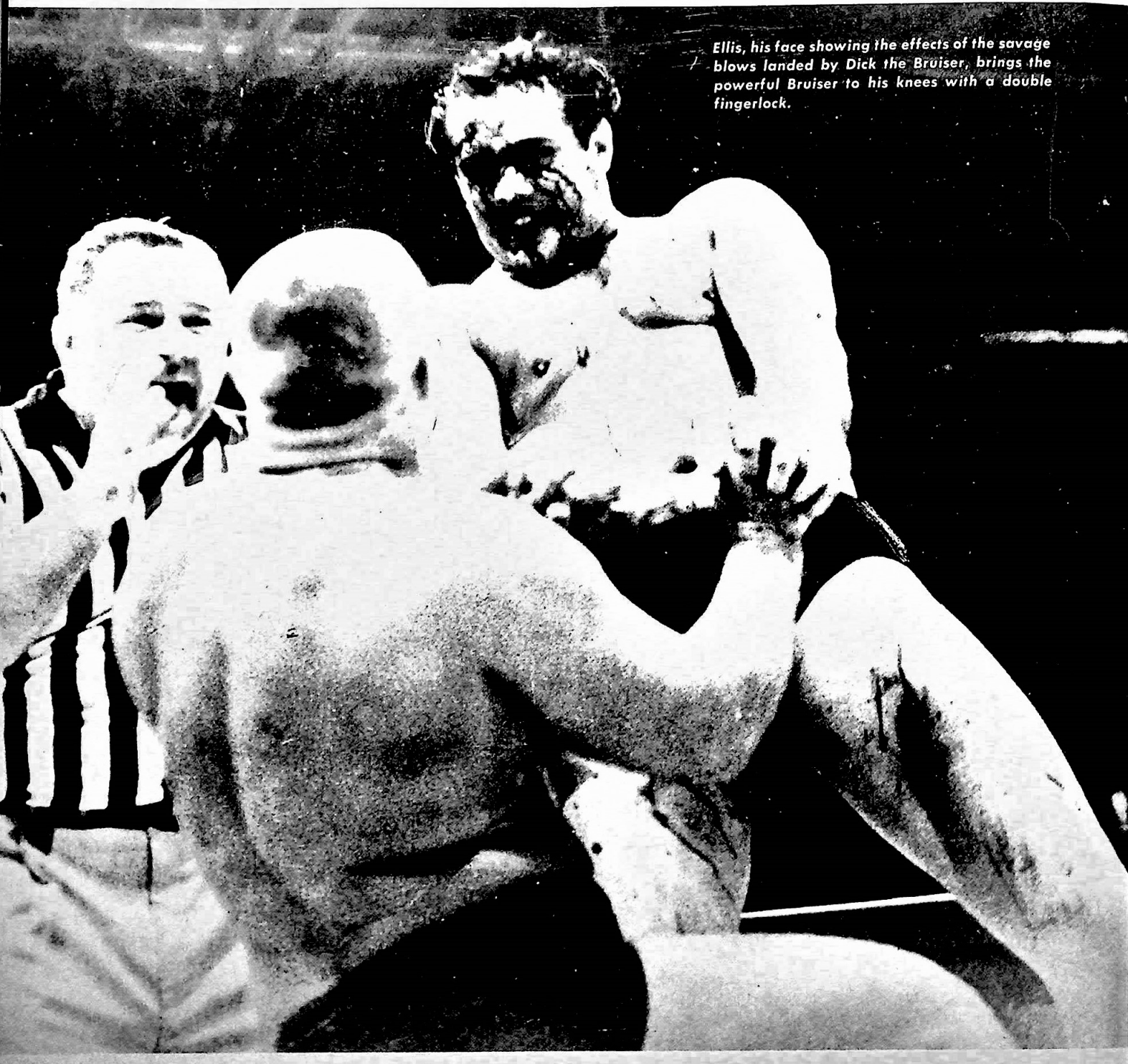




Never before has a young wrestler accomplished so much in so short a time. At 19, with practically no real experience behind him, Bob was signed to meet the heavyweight champion of the world.

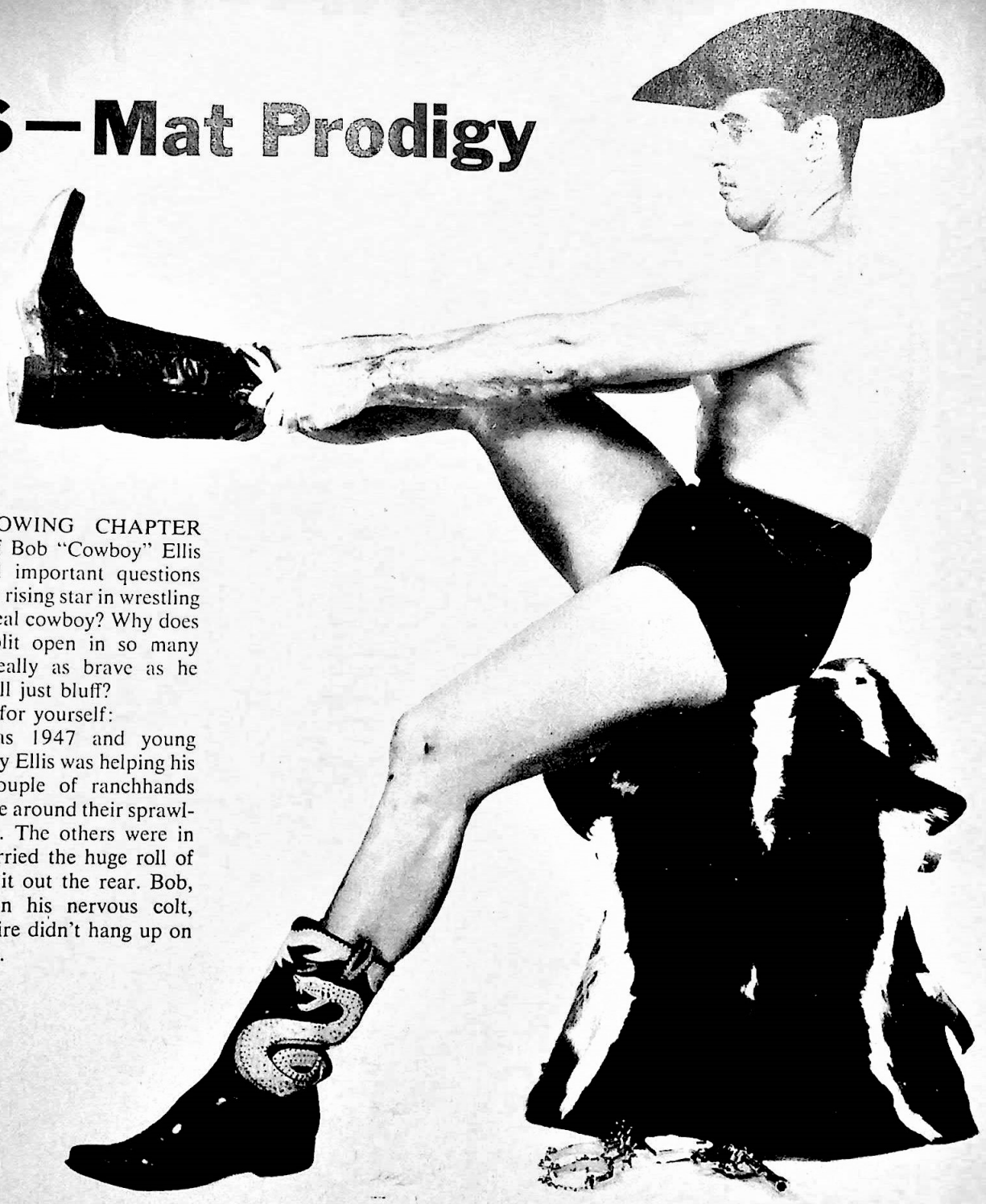
COWBOY BOB

BY ALLEN RESSLER



Ellis, his face showing the effects of the savage blows landed by Dick the Bruiser, brings the powerful Bruiser to his knees with a double fingerlock.

ELLIS—Mat Prodigy



THE FOLLOWING CHAPTER from the life of Bob "Cowboy" Ellis answers several important questions about the fastest rising star in wrestling today: Is he a real cowboy? Why does his forehead split open in so many bouts? Is he really as brave as he seems, or is it all just bluff?

Figure it out for yourself:

The year was 1947 and young ranchhand Bobby Ellis was helping his father and a couple of ranchhands string barbed wire around their sprawling Texas ranch. The others were in the Jeep that carried the huge roll of wire and strung it out the rear. Bob, riding behind on his nervous colt, made sure the wire didn't hang up on ground obstacles.

It was a routine job, one that the muscular young bronco buster had done many times — until a strand of the wire suddenly snapped from the strain. It happened now and then, with no damage; Bob would simply dismount and quickly repair the strand.

But this time the colt had strayed too close to the unrolled wire. When the strand snapped with a vicious *twang!* it whipped up and slashed the neurotic pony across the rump. Both the animal and young Bob were taken by surprise. As the horse bucked straight up, Bob flew off and came straight down — onto the barbed wire.

Face first.

He came within an inch of losing both eyes. The wire across Bob's forehead, cutting a dozen deep gashes and leaving his face a hideous mask of blood. As his father said afterward in a shaken voice, "I thought it had been a real tragedy — I thought Bob's whole face was gone. I damn near had a heart attack before I wiped the blood away and saw what really happened."

What really happened was bad enough. Anyone else, especially any other sixteen year old, would have been satisfied — eager — to be driven home in the Jeep and to a doctor. As for Bob, he said, as he held a crimson handkerchief to his mutilated head, "The wire's almost run out, Dad — let's finish the job. I'll live."

And there you have the answers to the questions. But there are more.

Not only did Bob Ellis live, he has

Ellis takes some advice from the great Ed "Strangler" Lewis before a recent bout in Kansas City. Bob calls Lewis "My great inspiration."

lived one of the fullest, happiest lives of any prominent American. He still has the Ellis ranch, and there he spends most of his spare time, bulldogging steers instead of his fellow wrestlers, breaking the high spirits of bucking broncs instead of the bones of men, and staying in the top condition that has helped make him one of the most sought-after attractions in wrestling today.

There are other things that helped. He is without a doubt the handsomest bone-buster in action — or out of action — past, present and probably future; a sort of Ingemar Johansson of the mat. But, like Johansson, he did not rise to the top of his trade through looks and physique alone — he knows his business from headlock to toehold, and in between.

As with many leaders in all fields, legends about Ellis are rife — and many of them are untrue. For example, one story has it that Cowboy Bob (he was called Cowboy from the very beginning of his career) tried to get into the Paratroops during the Korean War as a publicity stunt. This is untrue, for we have interviewed a man who knows the entire Ellis story; Ed Strangler Lewis. The Great Man tells it this way:

"In the first place, Bob Ellis has never had to pull any stunts to get publicity — his own ability, looks and ambition assure him of a good press. About that paratroop thing, Bob was 18 years old when the Korean war started — he also weighed about 240 pounds and he stood six feet-three inches. He'd read a lot about the paratroops of World War Two and envied their adventureous life. So he decided to be a paratroop. The Army decided he was too big. Bob went on a starvation diet and trimmed down to a lean 225 pounds — real skinny. Too tall, still, the Army said, better forget it. Well, there was no way for Bob to reduce his height, so he started a harassing operation that annoyed the Army brass until they *had* to accept him. He even wrote letters to the Secretaries of State and War — a court martial offense, actually, since you're supposed to go through channels in the Army.

"Anyway, they admired his spunk and it all turned out fine. Bob Ellis is still remembered as the biggest paratrooper ever to jump out of a C-47. He made 53 jumps in all."

And that's it. Lewis, by the way, gets into Ellis's biography because it was the old Strangler who, early in Bob's career, "discovered" him, as he has so many others, and helped him

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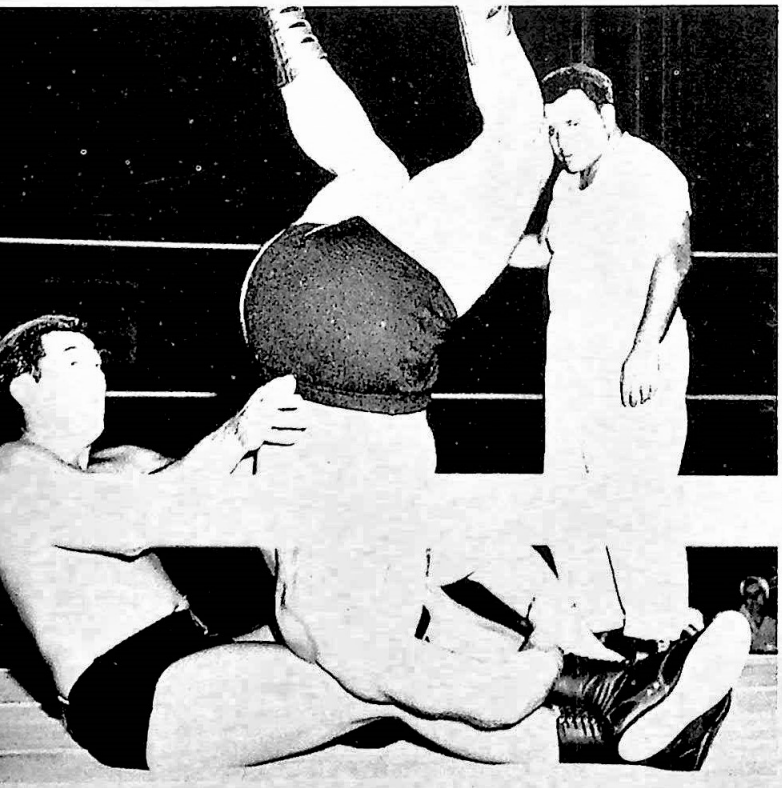
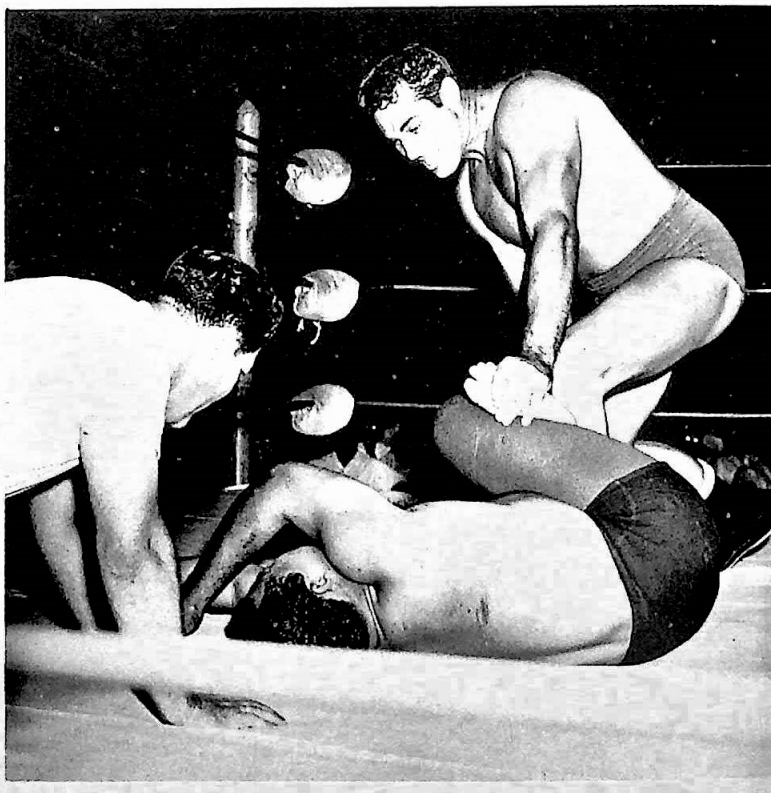
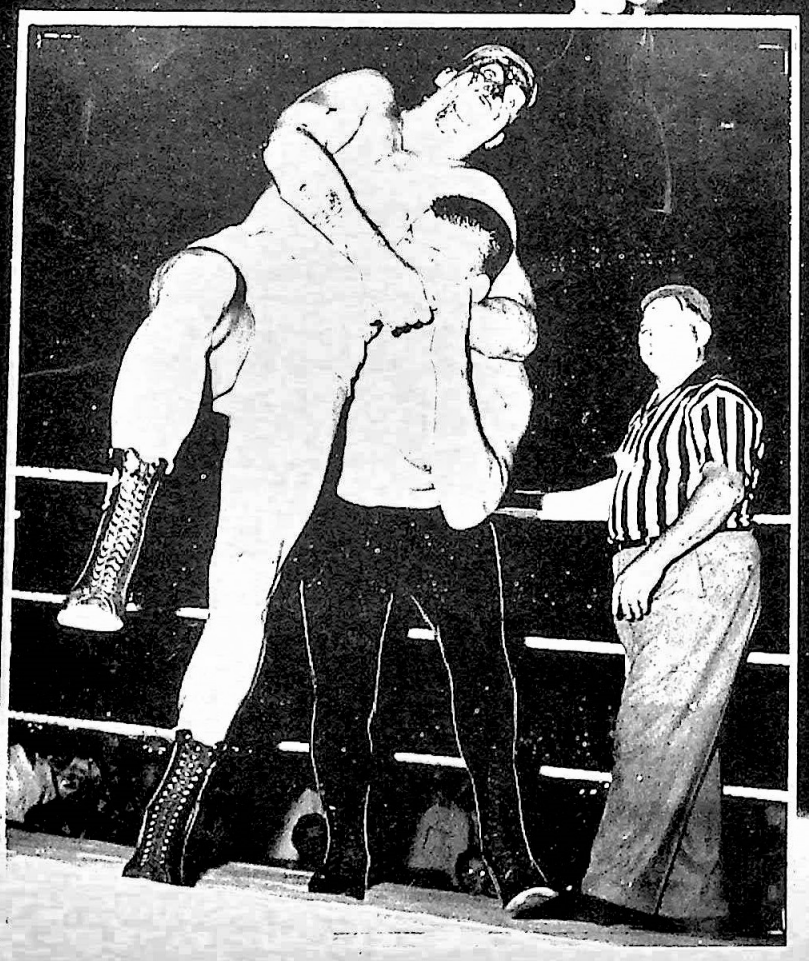


Bob Carpenter tries all sorts of acrobatics in unsuccessful attempt to break free from Ellis' punishing head scissors.



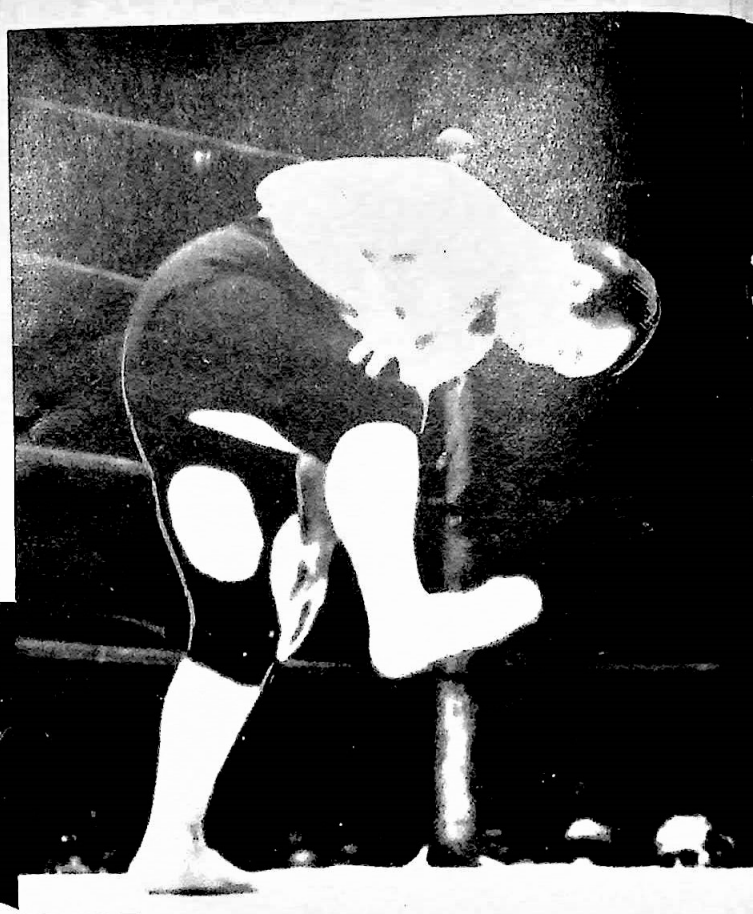
Ellis, who has developed a remarkable amount of mat know-how considering his limited experience, has leglock on Tokyo Joe.

Ellis executes his spectacular "Bulldogging Headlock" on Jack Allen during bout in Indianapolis Coliseum before a record audience of 15,433. Bob won match in a scant 38 seconds.



Ellis, left, who stands 6 feet 3, weighs about 250, punishes Bill Miller with headlock during bout in Elkhart, Indiana. It ended after an hour in a draw. Note blood covering Bob's face.

Meet Mr. Sakuro and Mr. Sasaki



Colorful Japanese Judo ritual is performed by Sakuro, right, and Sasaki after introduc-

Since wrestling would be pretty dull without a Japanese tag team to jeer and growl at, we all owe a vote of thanks to this newest Oriental duo

BY MICHAEL A. GLICK

Taro Sakuro, left, and partner Haruo Sasaki are introduced to Madison Square Garden crowd prior to start of bout.

tion. Entire ritual takes about five minutes and amuses the audience. Then they were ready to take on their foes.

TRAGEDY WAS THICK in the air on that winter's night in Vancouver, last year. The crowd in the big arena sensed it, though they did not know what form it would take. When it came it was a shock.

They saw the big Japanese wrestler lifted high over the head of his opponent, then sent crashing down to the mat. No human, it seemed, could possibly survive so tremendous a concussion. The entire arena floor shook, and Oyama Kato, the big Japanese wrestler, did not get up.

An hour later, in the dressing room, the doctor drew a sheet over the face of Oyama Kato. "Broken back," he murmured. "He never knew what hit him."

Taro Sakuro, his face expressionless, looked down once at the shrouded body of his friend and partner, then he silently turned away. "Where're you going?" the promoter asked.

Sakuro shook his head and kept walking.

It was shortly before Christmas, 1960. Although the religion of Sakuro and Kato had not been Christian—and they were far from Christians in the ring—they, like all westernized peoples, felt its effects. It would, thought Taro Sakuro, be a sad Christmas.

He went back to his hotel, packed, taxied to the airport and flew to San Francisco. On the way, he knew what he had to do. He had to forget. Kato had been the perfect tag team partner. Think of it!—Sakuro thought bitterly—after seven years of searching, he had finally found the partner who might have helped him bring a new era to wrestling. And now, only a few months after they had teamed up, Kato was dead.

Sakuro flew on to Hawaii. It was his second home, after Japan, which he had left when a small boy. Now, he decided, looking down as the plane banked over Diamond Head, he would have a vacation, before starting the search for a new partner.

And that is how the stage was set for one of the most fantastic coincidences in wrestling history.

A few days later Sakuro, a muscular 230-pounder who could swim like a fish at the age of six, was cruising above a coral bank off Oahu, far from the Waikiki crowds, with only the gulls and the clear blue water for company. The rest and the peace were doing him good. As he swam, he would occasionally dip his goggled face under the water and survey the lush, life-filled reef below. Suddenly he paused in mid-stroke. Ahead, about twelve feet down, was another swimmer. Sakuro had spotted him before when he dove from a small canoe. The face mask and spear showed why he was there. But now, swimming faster than he had thought, Sakuro had come close to him—and the other diver was in trouble. Bad trouble.

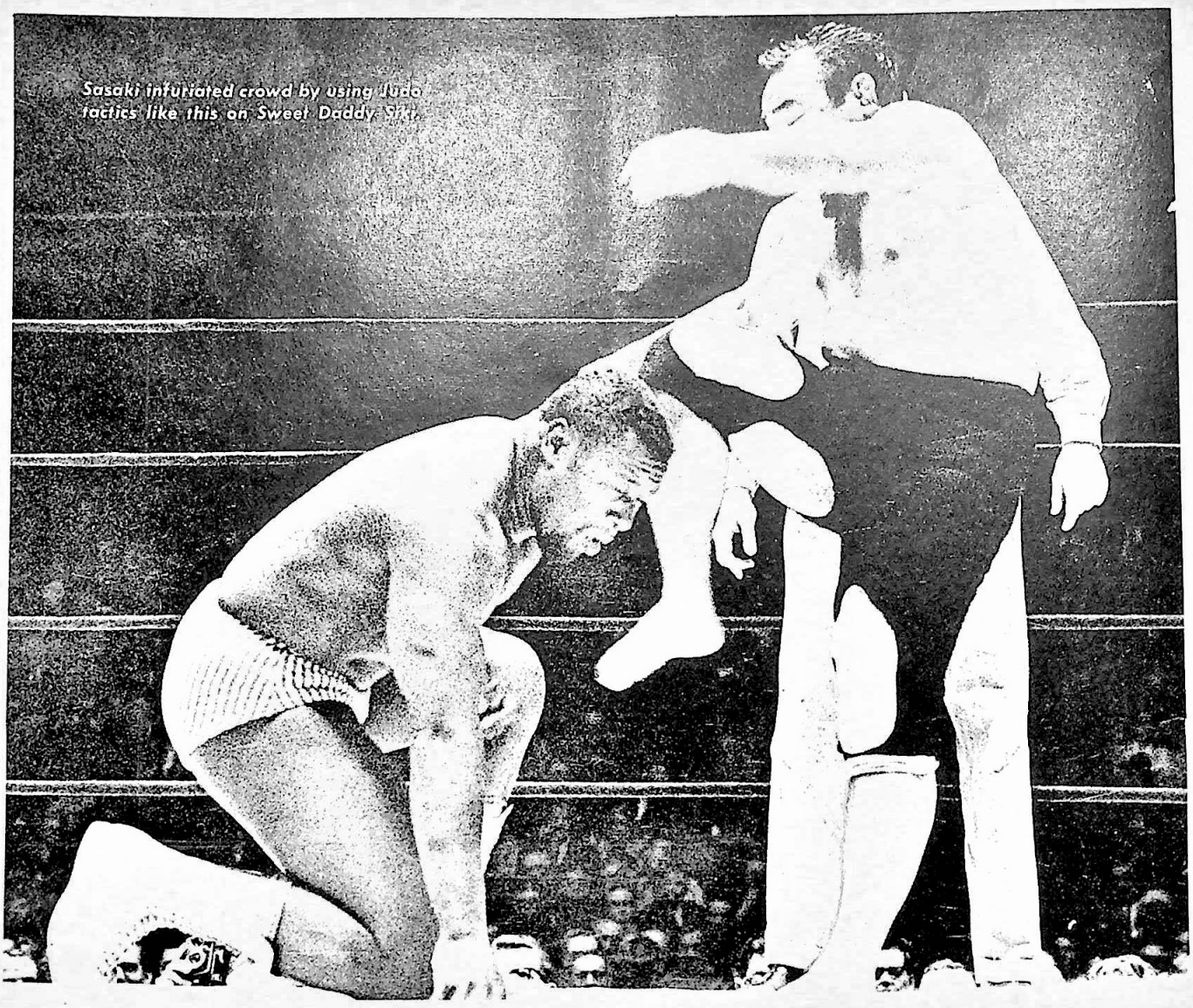
He had gone after a fish, apparently, squeezing beneath a natural arch of brain coral. Unfortunately, his spear had become wedged behind him somehow and now prevented him from backing out of the opening in the coral. His struggles were getting weaker when Sakuro spotted him—a million to one chance.

Sakuro dived, thrusting ahead with the powerful strokes of arms and legs that had conquered many of the world's best wrestlers. Now they conquered a half ton of coral. He yanked the spear away, shoved his powerful back under the arch of coral, and heaved. It rose just enough to free the stricken man. Sakuro seized him and hauled the limp form up to the surface. The shore was a couple of hundred yards ahead. By the time they reached it, the other man had recovered enough to make it under his own power. Once on the beach, they turned to each other. A few words were exchanged, then the eyes of the two men widened. Their stares were fixed on one another's ears. Both pairs were shaped in the unmistable pattern that can apply to only one profession in the world. Then the light of recognition came to each at the same time. They seized one another like long lost brothers. Which, in a way, they were.

The new tag team of Sakuro-Sasaki is the natural result. For the past six months the two villainous looking Orientals have been touring the U.S., making enemies with their brutal tactics, and also making a few friends—and it's the friends who know them best. One friend interviewed them recently and learned a few facts of interest, not only about the bearded partners but also about life in general.

"I don't like American women," said Haruo Sasaki with a glint in his eye (he has an American type sense of humor, though). "They get put on a pedestal and refuse to get off even after they grab a husband. The Japanese women know their place. Their job is to please a man—and they do their job well." Sasaki is a 31-year old bachelor.

"I think *all* women are just great," says the quieter, more dignified Taro Sakuro. "And I should know—I've



Sasaki infuriated crowd by using Judo tactics like this on Sweet Daddy Siki.

met so many of them." He is happily married.

The dynamic, slam-bang style used by the Japanese team pleases even those fans who have never heard of judo and karate, on which their style is based.

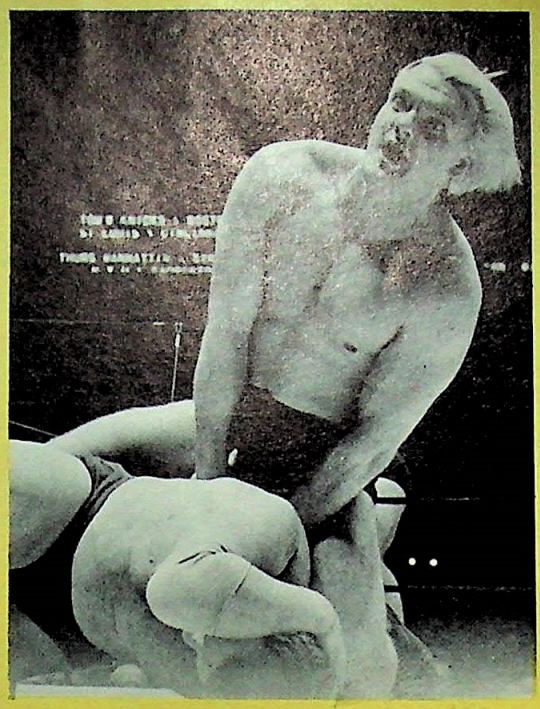
"Karate," says Sakuro, his eyes lighting up. "*There's* a fascinating method of murder for you!" He turns serious at once. "We have a signed paper promising that we will not use the crippling blows of karate except to save our own lives. If and when we have to use it, I guarantee our opponents will lose the match — and possibly go to a hospital. If my old partner, Kato, had resorted to it, he would not have died, perhaps."

This interview with the Japanese aces took place in the dressing room of an eastern arena shortly after your reporter watched the popular team of Mark Lewin and Don Curtis defeat a pair of tough villains with their dreaded "Sleeper Hold." Sasaki scoffed at The Sleeper as used by Curtis and Lewin. "I got news for those guys," he said with a grin. "Curtis says he learned the hold while he was in the U.S. Marines, and that he improved on it. The truth is that The Sleeper hold has been used by we Japanese for hundreds of years. Not only that, my partner, Sakuro, and I have a Sleeper that works much better and faster than that thing Curtis uses."

Sakuro then took over in his own quiet way. "Yes, and we hereby challenge Curtis and Lewin to a match. In it, *only The Sleeper can bring about a victory*—and we'll see who wins. It will be centuries of know-how and experience against a couple of upstarts who are trying to capitalize on something that doesn't belong to them.

It sounds like a good thing to us. Don Curtis and Mark Lewin are both friends of ours—and wonderful guys. But we don't see how they can ignore this valid challenge from a couple of very good wrestlers who have proved themselves. They have been thrown the gauntlet. Let's hope they pick it up—preferrably on television where they can prove their ability to their millions of fans.

As for the new team of Sakuro and Sasaki, they promise to deliver further thrills to further audiences who hate and appreciate them all at once. They will intone the fateful words before each of their bouts as they kneel before the golden Buddha that is their protection and inspiration: "*Kamesama — Dozo — Irutukini tasukate kudasai!* — O Mighty Buddha, protect us in the clinches!" •



CLOSE-UP OF JOHNNY VALENTINE

There are several occupations that Johnny Valentine could do as well as wrestling—such as grave-digging, undertaking, butchering, or turning on the gas at the dog pound.

Also, he might have been the heavyweight boxing champion of the world. It was in 1944 that 15-year-old John Wisniski, of Renton, Washington, was discovered in a gymnasium by Wladek Zbyszko, former great wrestler. Zbyszko, realizing that he had a "find" on his hands, took young John to his health farm near St. Joseph, Missouri, where he and equally famous brother, Stanislaus, made a fine wrestler out of big John Wisniski. Current wrestling fans say otherwise—they say the Zbyszkos made a Frankenstein-like monster out of the boy.

Since his mat debut in Buenos Aires in 1947, Johnny Valentine has spilled more blood, probably, than any man since Attila the Hun. A lot of it has been his own, since irate fans love to sever the Valentine blood vessels with sharp objects.

"He is the cruelest human being I ever saw," said a longtime enthusiast after watching the huge (6-4, 247 pounds) wrestler practically dismember a helpless opponent, "—and he'll never change!"

The fan was wrong. **Johnny Valentine has changed**—and this is the official announcement.

At Madison Square Garden, recently, a capacity audience saw Valentine, teamed with a sensational youngster named Argentine Apollo, as clean as a choir boy, do battle against the fabulously villainous Fabulous Kangaroos. Although rough at times, considering the competition, big John was a tribute to good sportsmanship and good fellowship.

"What," asked a shocked customer, "caused the drastic change in Valentine?"

Valentine himself gave the answer. "About six months ago, while trying to get at an opponent that I'd knocked out of the ring, I accidentally kicked an old lady who was sitting in the front row. Later, I visited her in the hospital. If she'd cursed me or sued me, I wouldn't have been affected. But she **smiled** up at me from the cast that covered her lower body and legs.

"Then she said I wasn't really bad—I was just kind of lost. If I found myself, I'd be a good human being."

Johnny admits that he broke down and bawled for the first time in his life. He went back to see his new friend daily until she was discharged from the hospital. Meanwhile he **found** himself.

The fans and the decent wrestlers are happy at the change, of course. But another segment of society does not appreciate the new Valentine. Said Al Costello, 50 per cent of the Fabulous Kangaroos, "Why couldn't he have stayed a dirty dog? I liked him the way he was. Now he's so decent—I hate his guts!"

Could be that Costello hates the kind of treatment he himself dishes out. According to Valentine, "I've committed plenty of sins in the past—it's going to take a long time to atone for them." This means plenty of trouble for the likes of the Kangaroos and anybody else who gets into the same ring with the New Valentine. . . .

. . . And plenty of enjoyment for the fans.

Please turn the page

1969

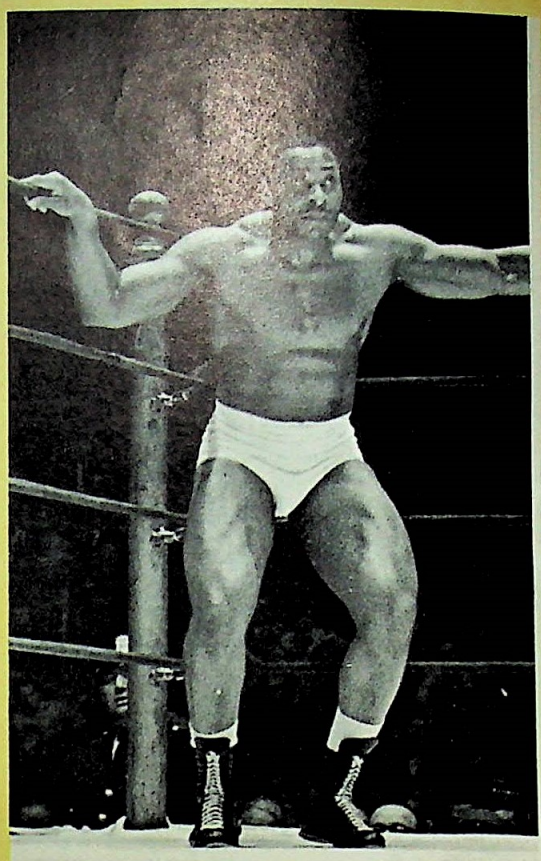
JOHNNY VALENTINE

WRESTLING REVUE'S PIN UP SERIES / NUMBER 3

A Wrestling Revue Editor Reports . . .

A RECORD BREAKING NIGHT AT MADISON SQUARE GARDEN

Photographs by STANLEY WESTON



New sensation Art "Sailor" Thomas glares at opponent prior to start of bout.

ART "Sailor" THOMAS VS. RED GRUPP

ACCORDING TO THE PAPERS, they turned away more than 5,000 people from the Madison Square Garden box office on the chill night of February 28, 1961 — and I was almost one of them. My press card got me nowhere as I shoved against the solid wall of struggling humanity that filled Eighth Avenue between 49th and 50th Streets. Then a flying wedge of police broke a pathway through the mob; behind them came one of the star attractions of the evening, towering Sailor Art Thomas, who spotted me and reached out a brawny hand of assistance. A moment later, escorted by one of the best built young men in all the world, and two dozen of New York's Finest, I was finally inside the great arena.

In my press row seat I sat at the rim of a well of tense people. More than 20,000 of them filled every seat, and another 2,000 were permitted standing room behind the last rows of seats. They made more sustained noise than I had ever heard. When 80,000 people cheer at a football game the sound is deadened by the open sky. But with a solid roof to clamp down the sound, you feel as though trapped inside a pressure cooker.

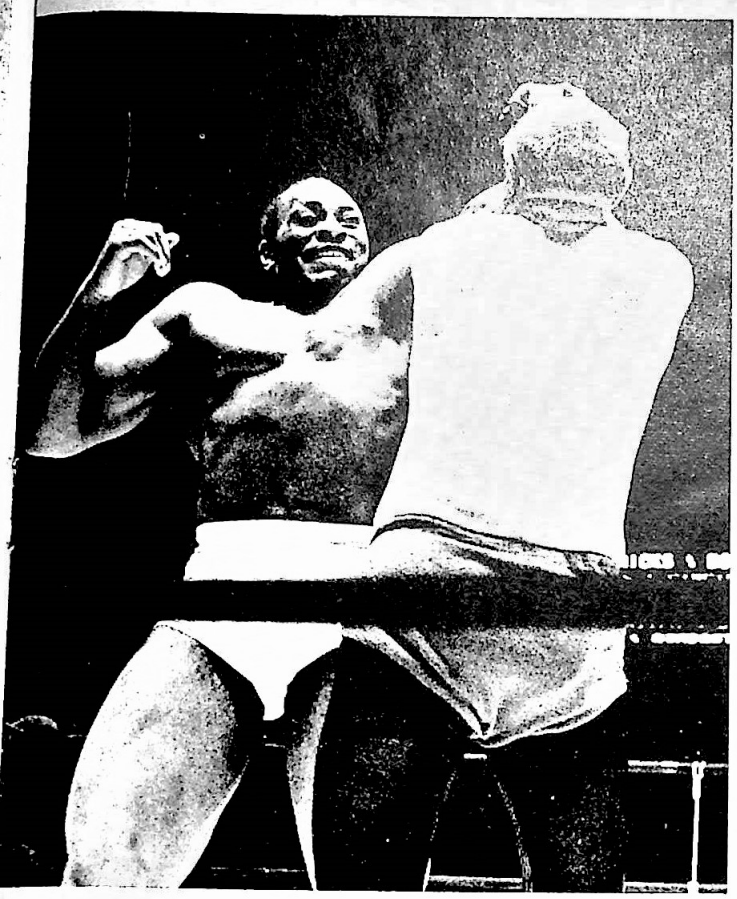
It was a joy-seeking crowd that had come to find happiness and they cheered everything, including ring announcer Al Mitchel and the ushers who happened to stray into the spotlight. They cheered loudest when the new sensation from Buenos Aires, bare-footed Vittorio Anchorena, newly dubbed Argentine Apollo — with the aid of towering Johnny Valentine — won the first fall from the savage Fabulous Kangaroos. The crowd couldn't cheer the second or third falls because New York State's eleven o'clock curfew forced an end too soon, thus terminating the match and enabling the Kangaroos to retain their U.S. tag team championship belts.

But even before all this happened there was plenty of reason to cheer. Old stars and new flashed into view in breathtaking succession: Primo Carnera, showing the effects of his 35 athletic years, yet noble in defeat, stirred the depths of nostalgia among wrestling and boxing fans alike. Sailor Thomas and Bruno Sammartino were the newcomers, the rest were veterans — the Lewin-Curtis team, Pat O'Connor, Buddy Rogers, Hans Schmidt, Eddie Graham, Karl von Hess, Billy Darnell — an array of radiant talent almost impossible to be seen except on a non-televised, super extravaganza such as this.

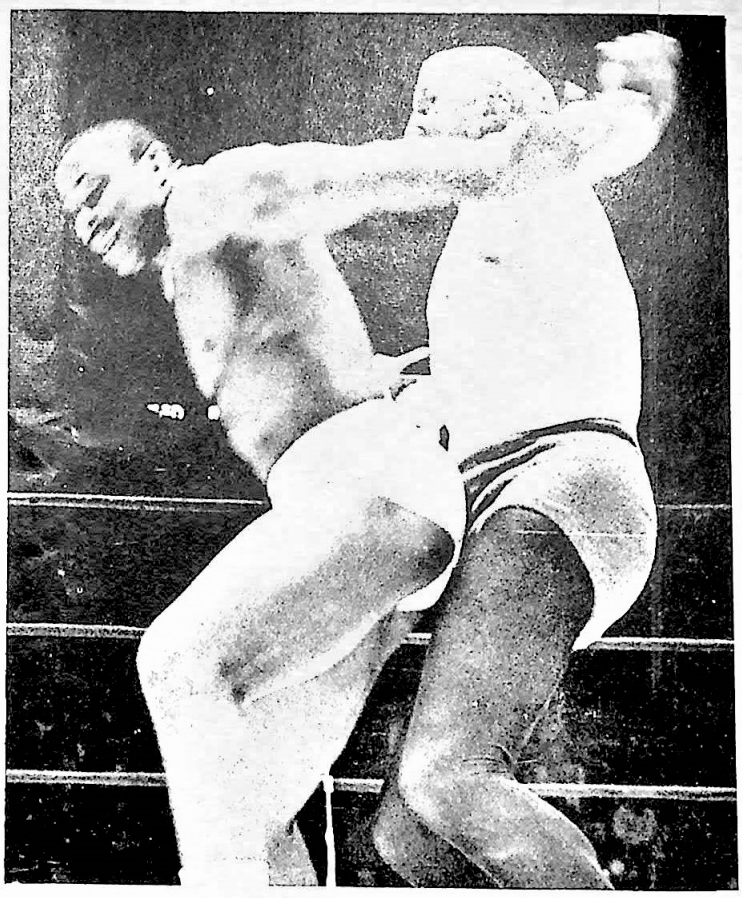
Yet, for this old observer, anyway — it was the audience who stole the show. They did not try to hide their emotions, which, according to psychologists, is bad for the mind; instead, they screamed out their joy and anger, their love and their hatred — and they drowned their troubles in the vast sea of sound and fury.

When the sea vanished at eleven o'clock they wended their many ways homeward. I left the Garden and walked down Eighth Avenue toward 42nd Street and the bright lights. The choked mass of humanity thinned out, the laughter died and the voices grew still. Little by little, the troubles came back.

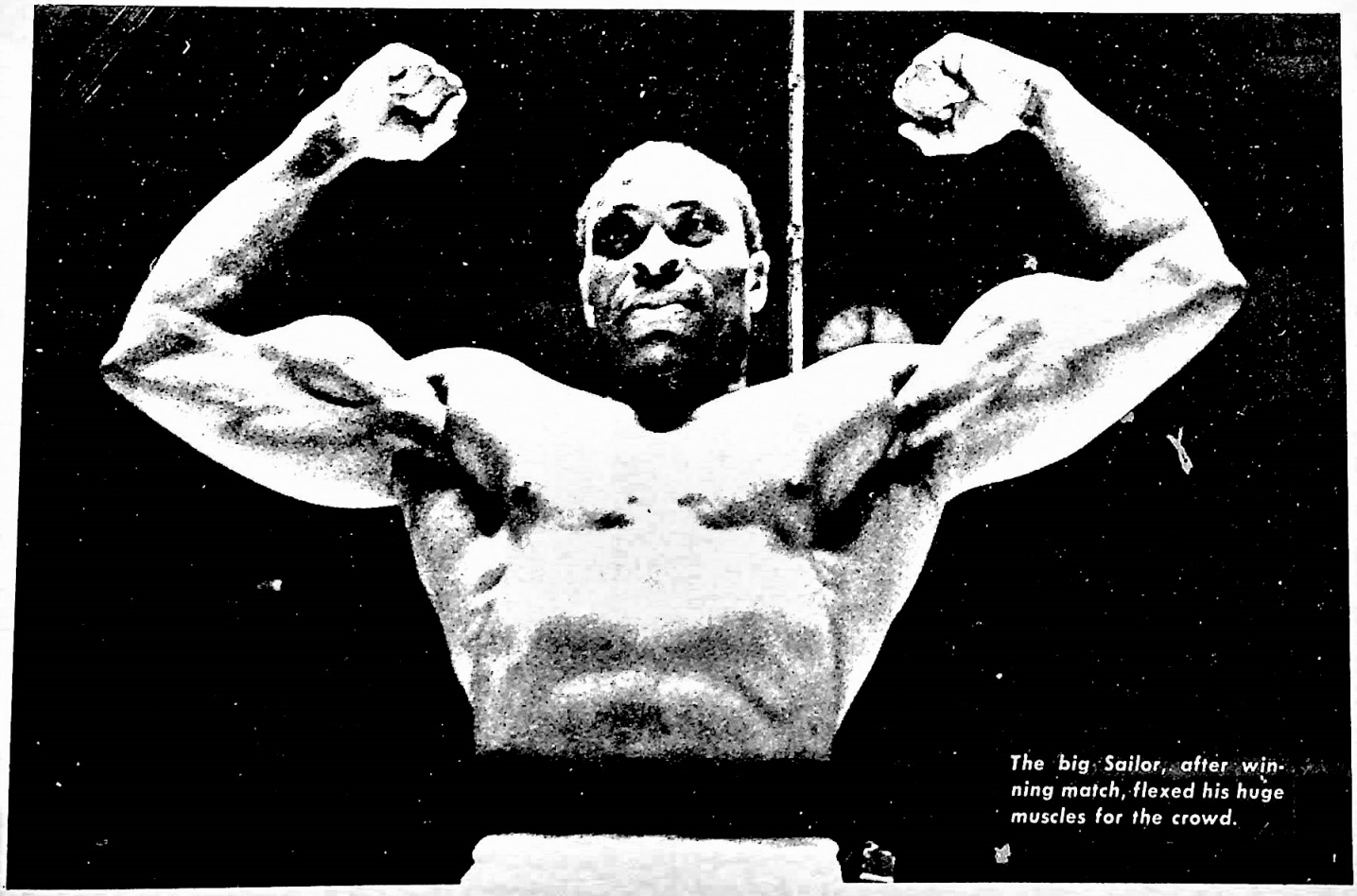
But now maybe they didn't seem as important as before, and maybe they were a little easier to face.



Thomas easily breaks arm lock applied by Red Grupp soon after bout begins.



Thomas amused the 20,000 onlookers when he bumped his rear end into Grupp's mid-section to free himself from a hold.



The big Sailor, after winning match, flexed his huge muscles for the crowd.

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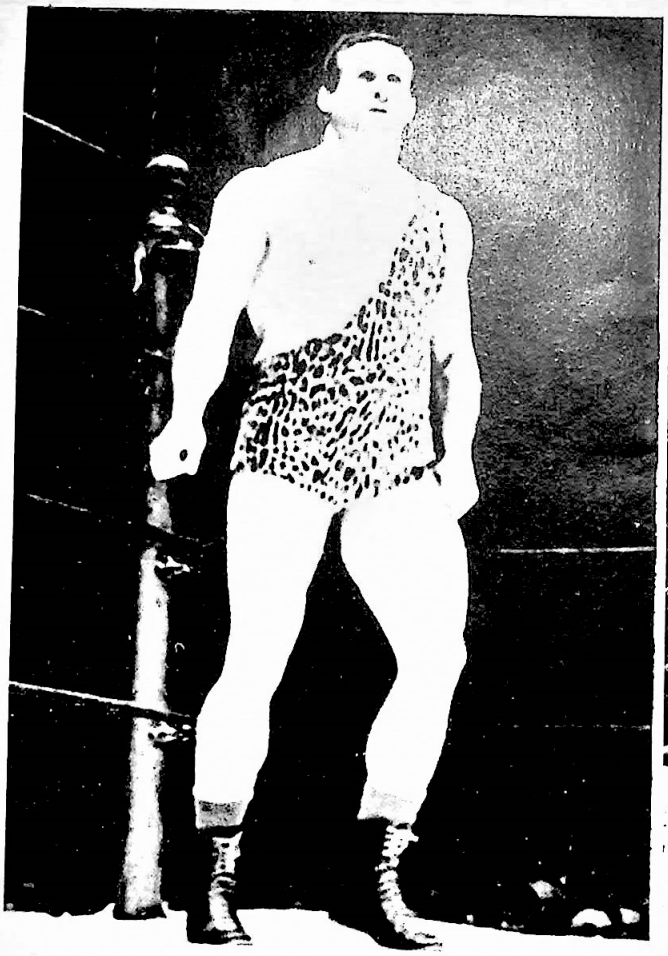
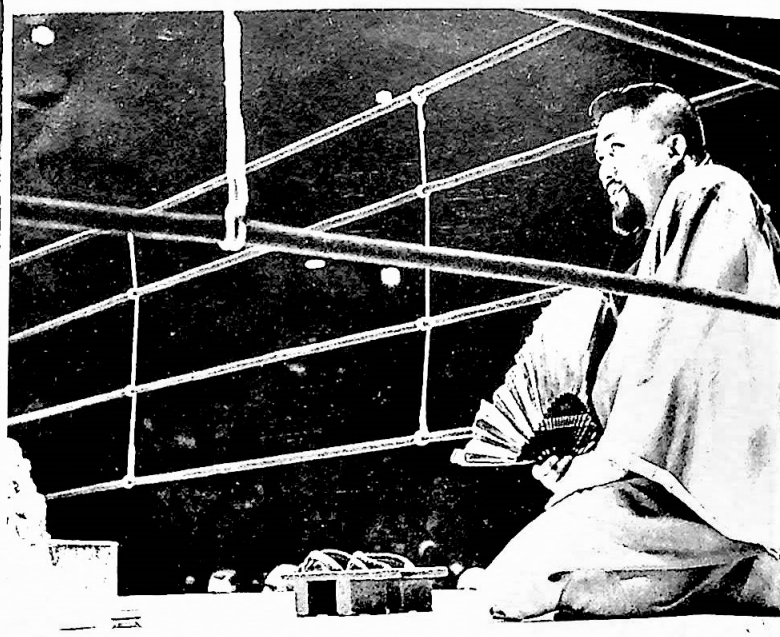
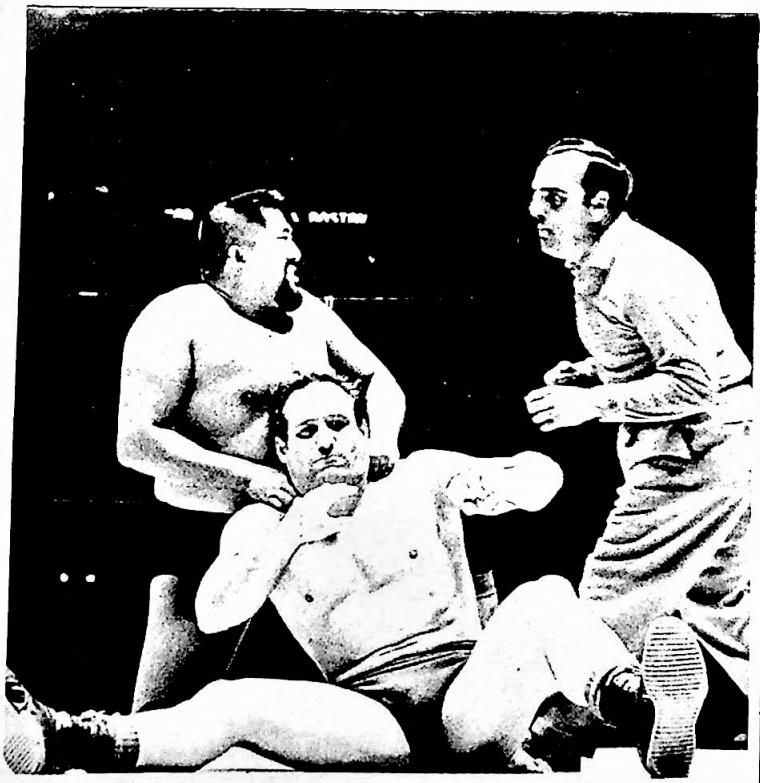
BILLY DARNELL VS. TARO SAKURO



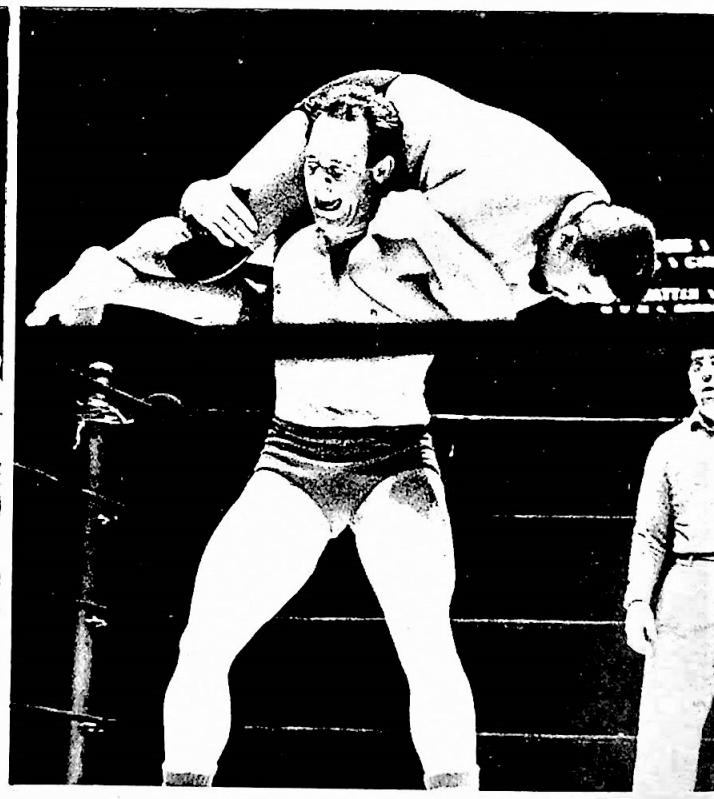
Handsome Billy Darnell, a favorite of the crowd, steps out of his corner to acknowledge his introduction.



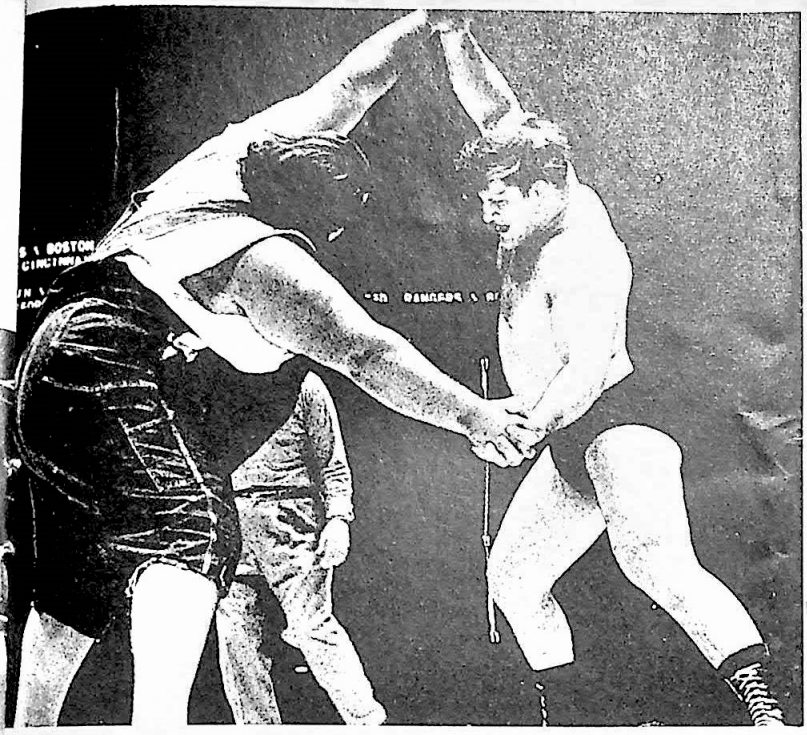
Famed Japanese star Taro Sakuro goes through his colorful pre-bout ritual prior to start of his match with Darnell.



Sakuro clamps painful judo hold on Darnell's neck, tells the referee to make Billy quit before he kills him.

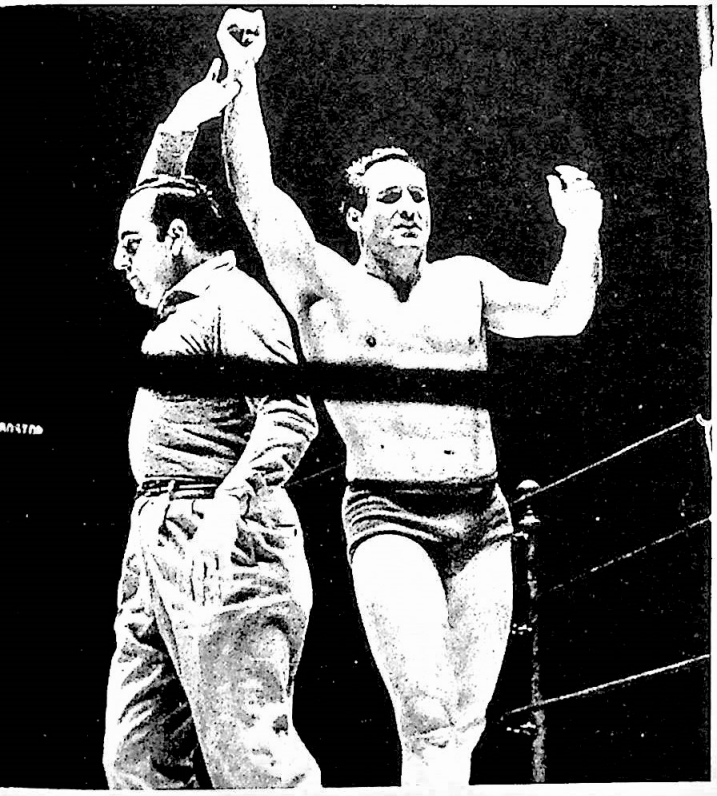


Darnell broke judo hold, left, by spinning free. He then picked up Sakuro in airplane spin, then pinned him.

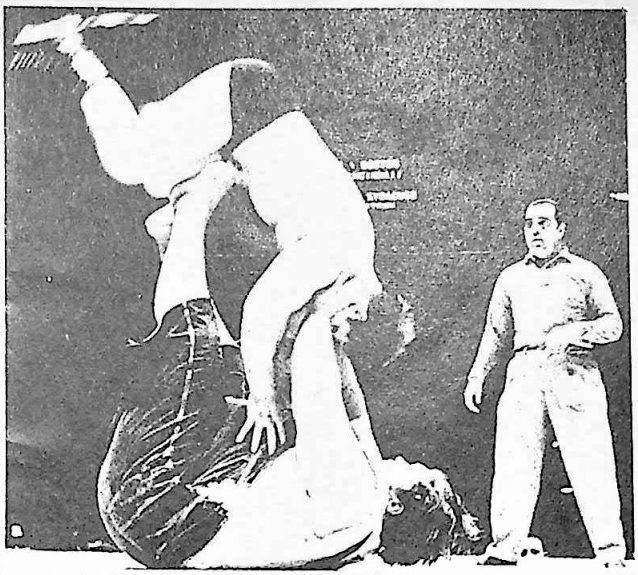


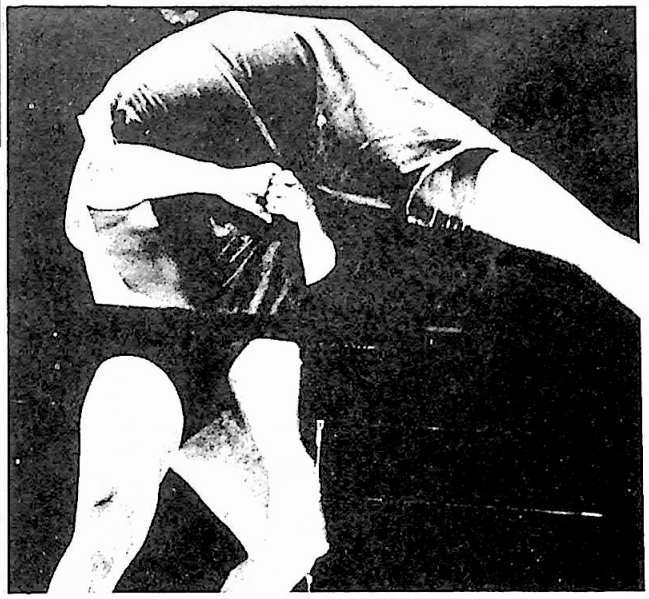
Bout which created the most interest on Garden show paired 604-pound Haystacks Calhoun, left, and strongman Bruno Sammartino.

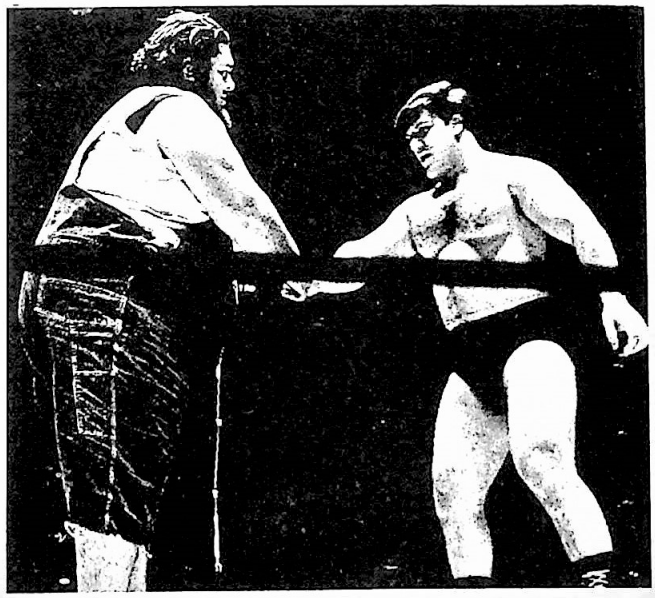
HAYSTACKS CALHOUN VS. BRUNO SAMMARTINO



After winning bout with his spectacular airplane spin Darnell has his arm raised in victory to the delight of the vast crowd.







Series of photos above depict peak action of Sammartino-Calhoun bout and the warm handshake after it was over. The end came when Calhoun fell out of ring onto the apron and was unable to return before the referee counted him out.

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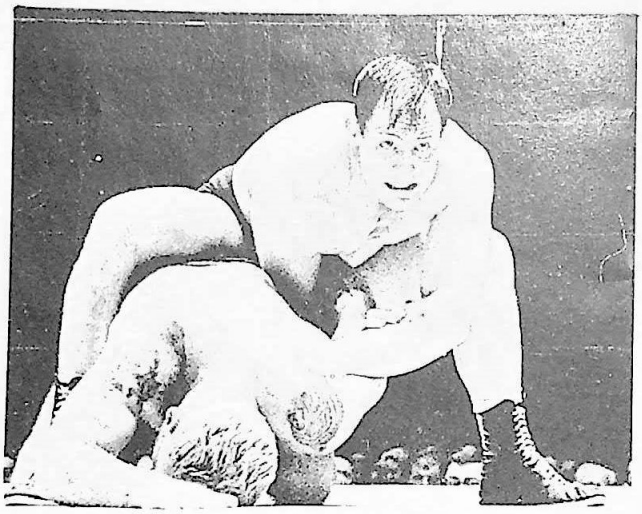
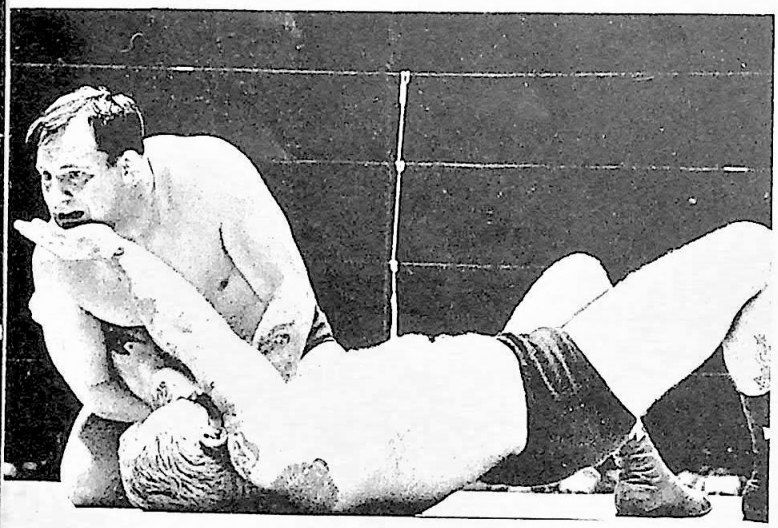
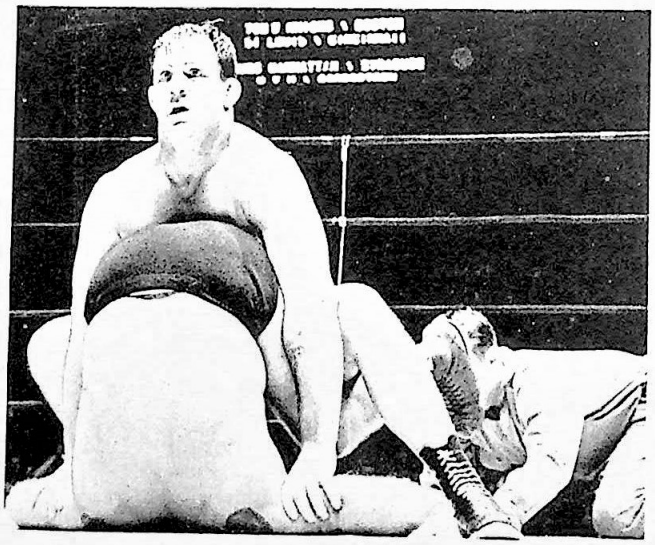
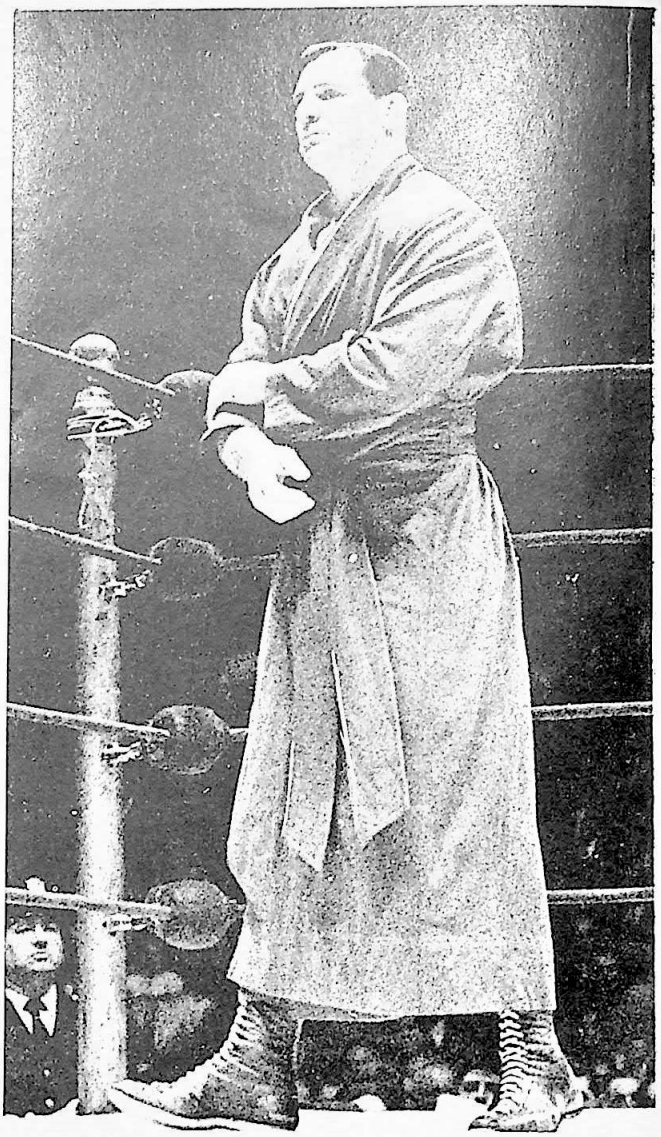
PAT O'CONNOR VS. KARL VON HESS





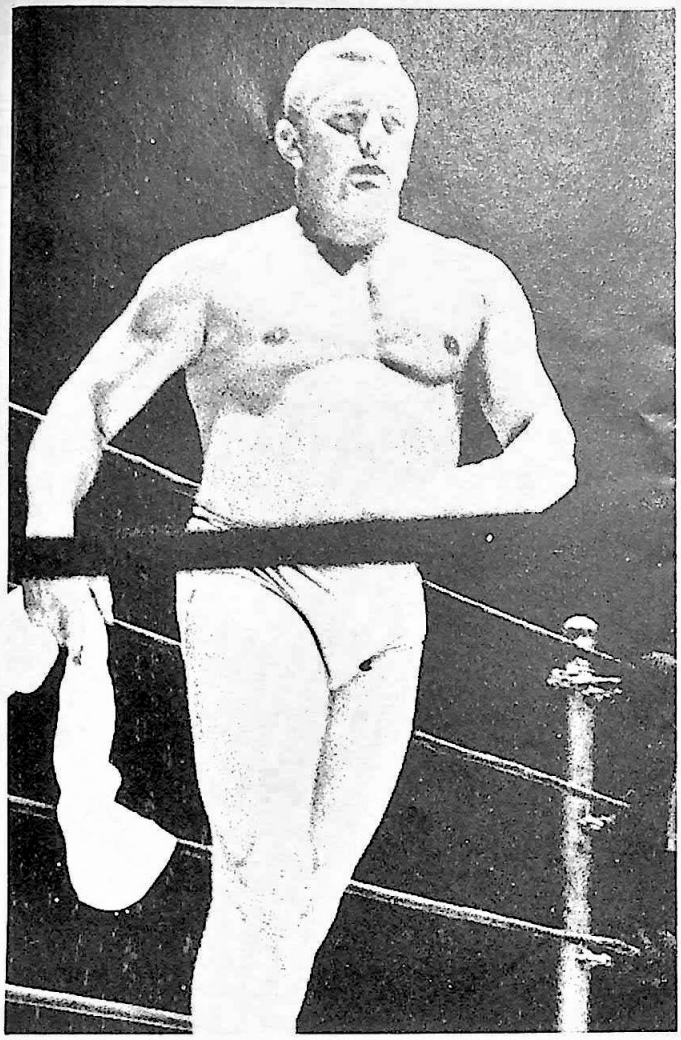


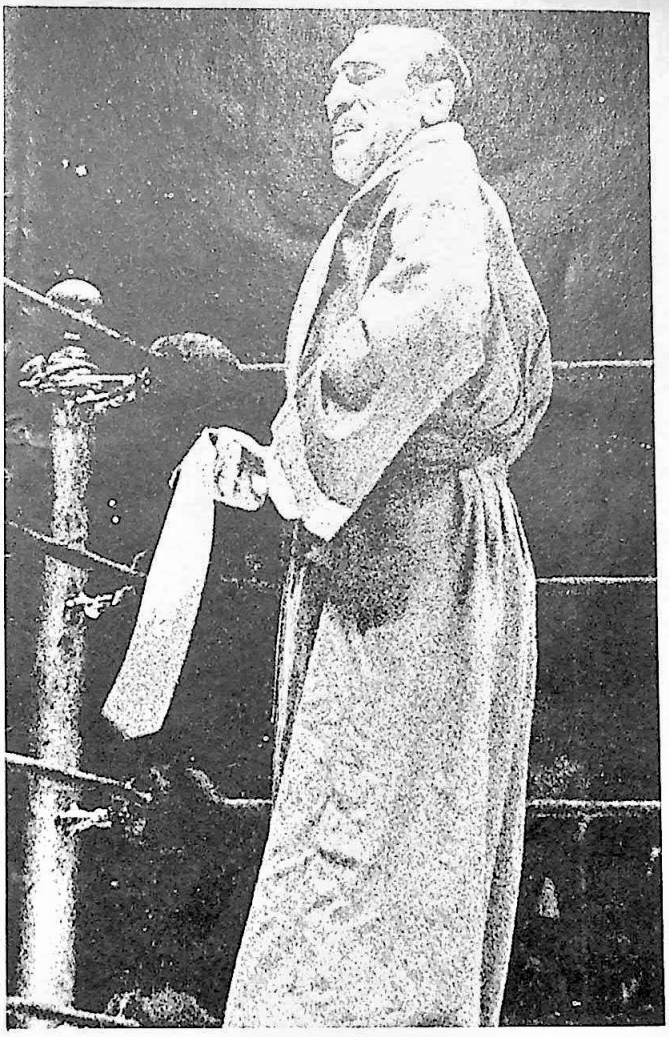
Top: Pat O'Connor applies extreme pressure to painful armlock on German tough guy Karl Von Hess. Center: Von Hess tries to break O'Connor's armlock by pressing Pat's jaw. Bottom picture shows hold O'Connor used to win the match.



Pat O'Connor, who is generally recognized as world's champion, enters the ring wearing bright green robe.

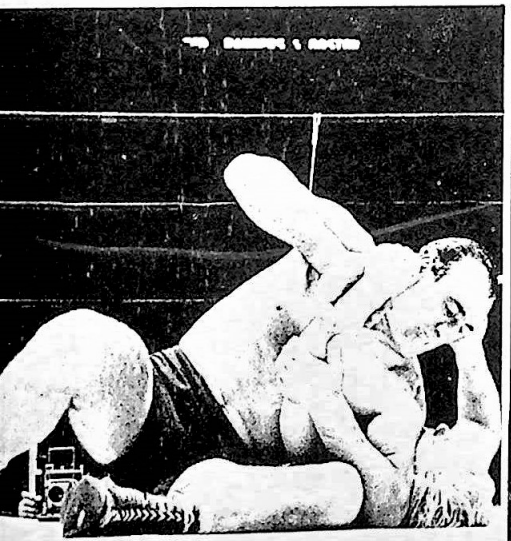
Winner and still champion, Pat O'Connor acknowledges cheers of crowd after his brilliant winning performance.



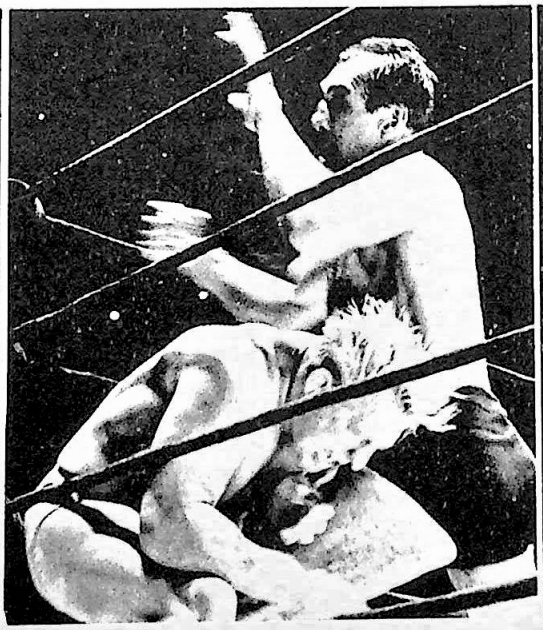


BUDDY ROGERS VS. PRIMO CARNERA

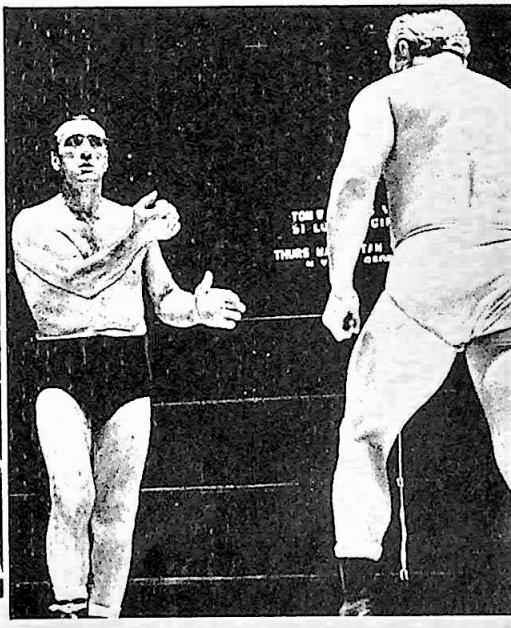
Co-main event of the evening featured former heavyweight boxing champion Primo Carnera, right, and the famous international star Nature Boy Buddy Rogers. Photos above show the contestants making their entry into the ring.



Carnera, who weighed 268 pounds, clamps armlock on Rogers soon after bout begins.



Rogers, left, ducks Carnera's right to chin after Primo had sent him flying into corner.



Carnera threatens to slug Buddy after he was kicked in the groin by Nature Boy.

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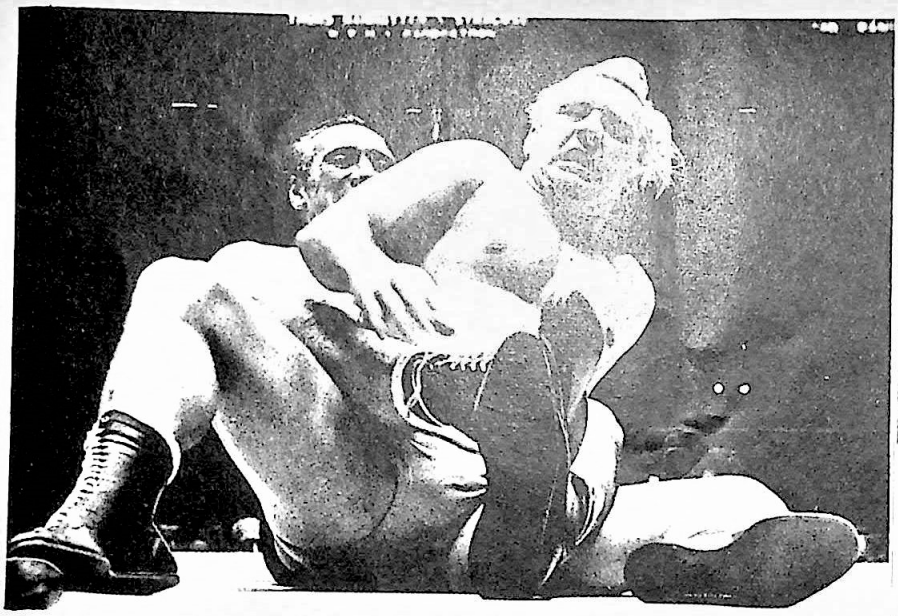
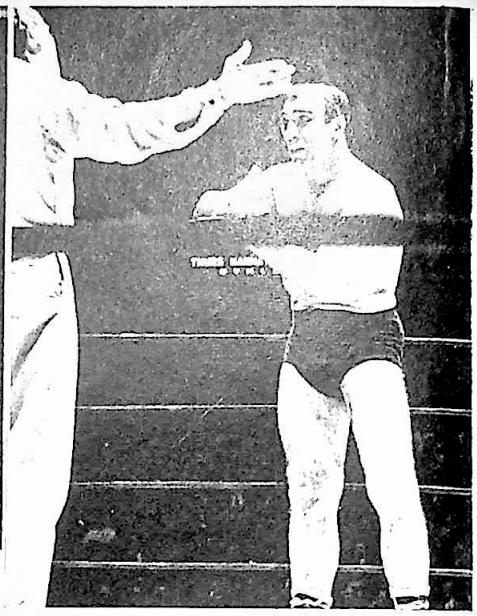
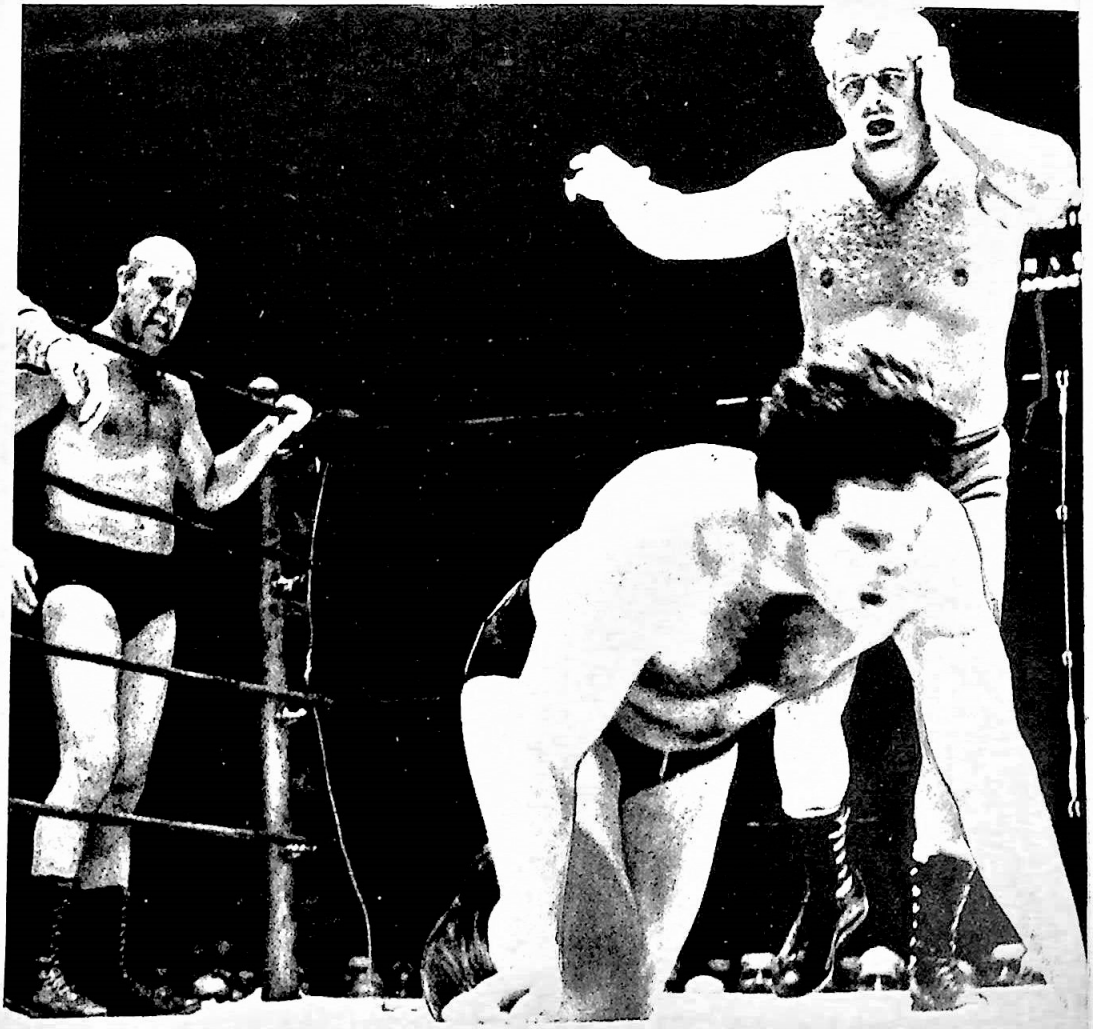


Primo wraps his enormous legs around Rogers and squeezes. Buddy, a tried veteran, was on the verge of giving up, but finally survived.

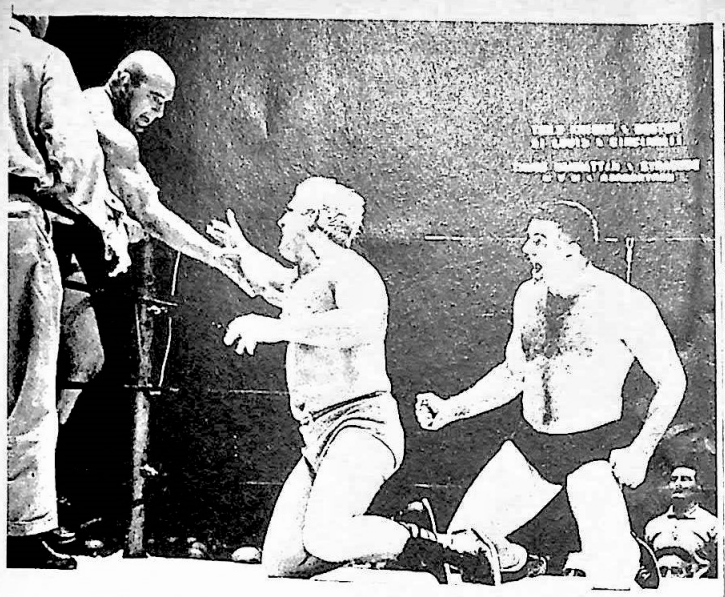


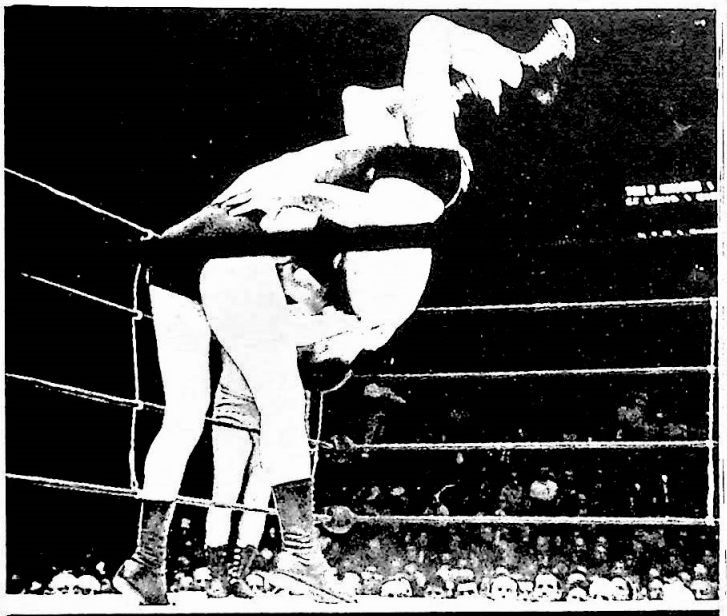
Primo bitterly protests referee's decision that he was pinned, claims that his shoulders were off mat.

DON CURTIS and MARK LEWIN VS. EDDIE GRAHAM and HANS SCHMIDT

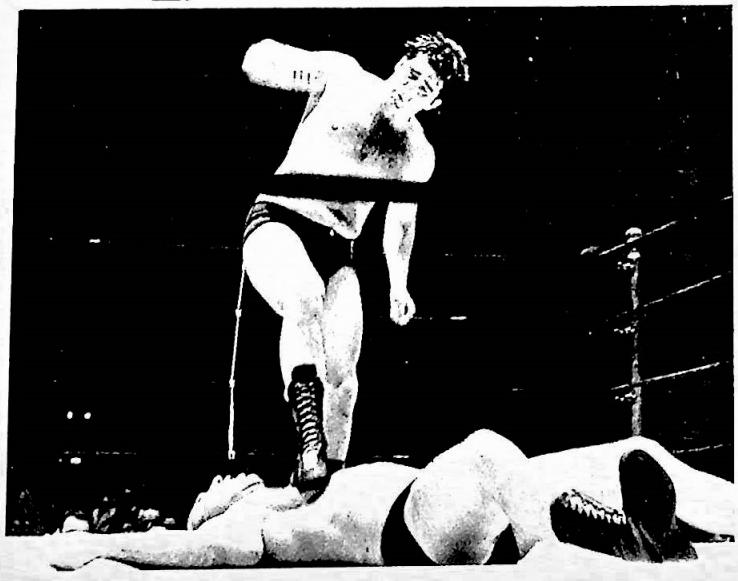


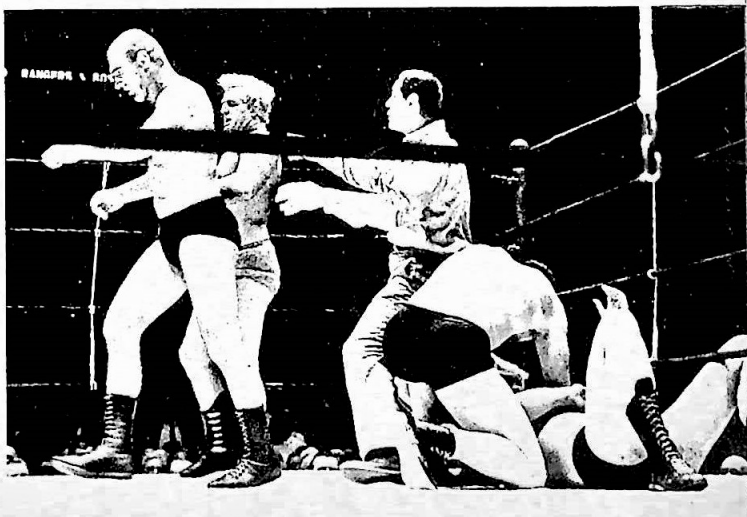
Savage tag team match features Hans Schmidt, left, and Eddie Graham, holding his ear, against, the popular team of Mark Lewin, down, and Don Curtis. Here Lewin tries to crawl out of danger after.





Curtis makes spectacular leap off top rope hoping to land on Eddie Graham. He missed target and landed instead on the floor in a cloud of white rosin dust.





Top: Eddie Graham reaches to tag partner Hans Schmidt after enraged Don Curtis battered him unmercifully. Center: Schmidt body slams Curtis with terrific force. In picture directly above Mark Lewin stomps down hard on Schmidt's chest.

Bout ended when Lewin, on floor and attended to by his partner, Curtis, was knocked out by Schmidt. Here winners Schmidt and Graham are ordered back to corner by referee Danny Bartfield. The crowd was still booing after they left the ring.

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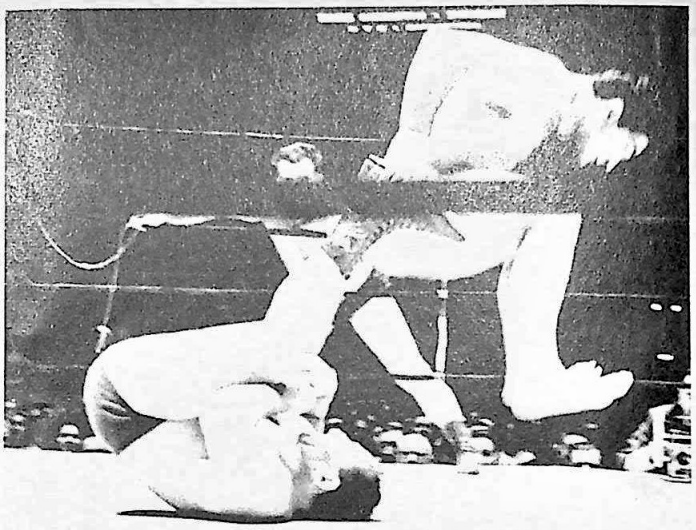
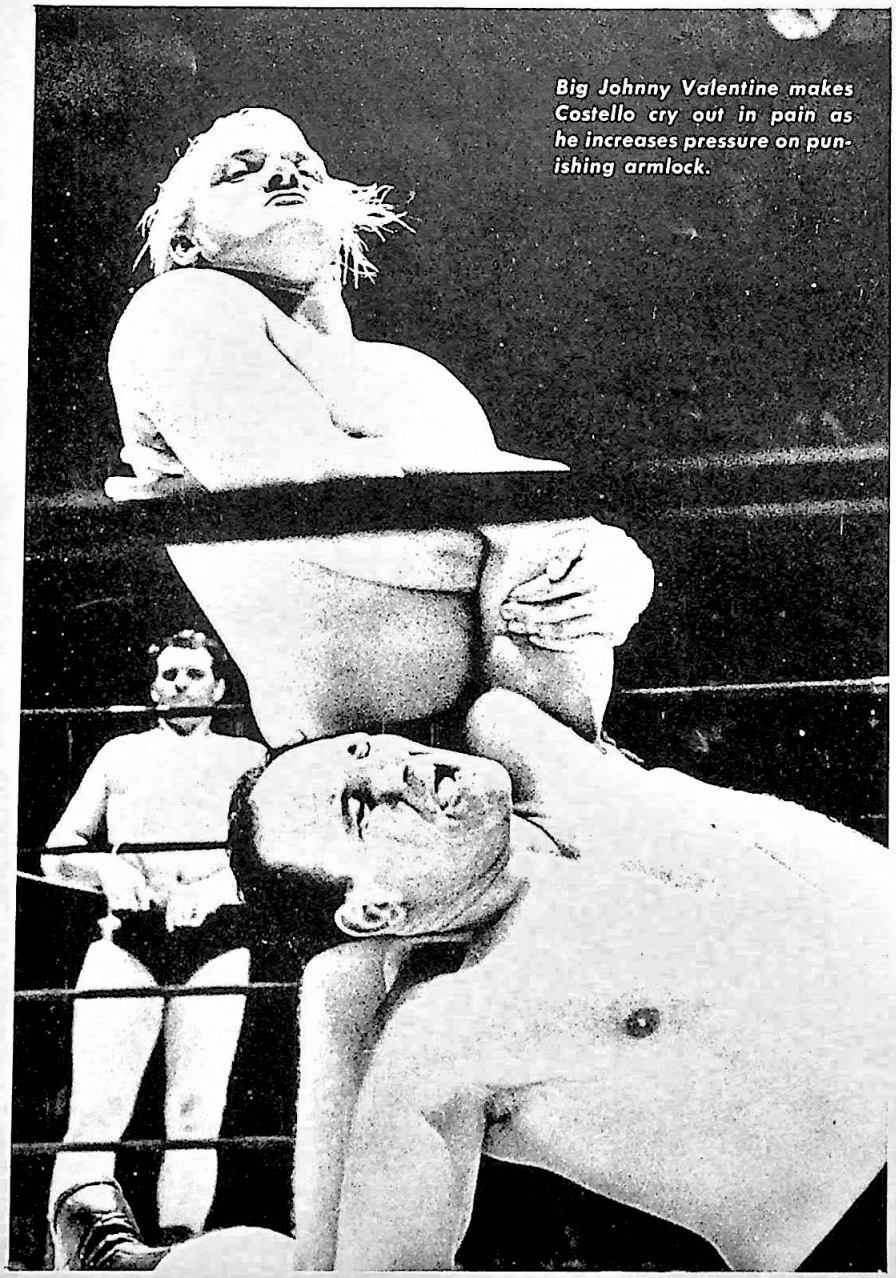
The Kangaroos, Al Costello (wearing hat) and Roy Heffernan, receive referee's instructions along with Vittorio Apollo.

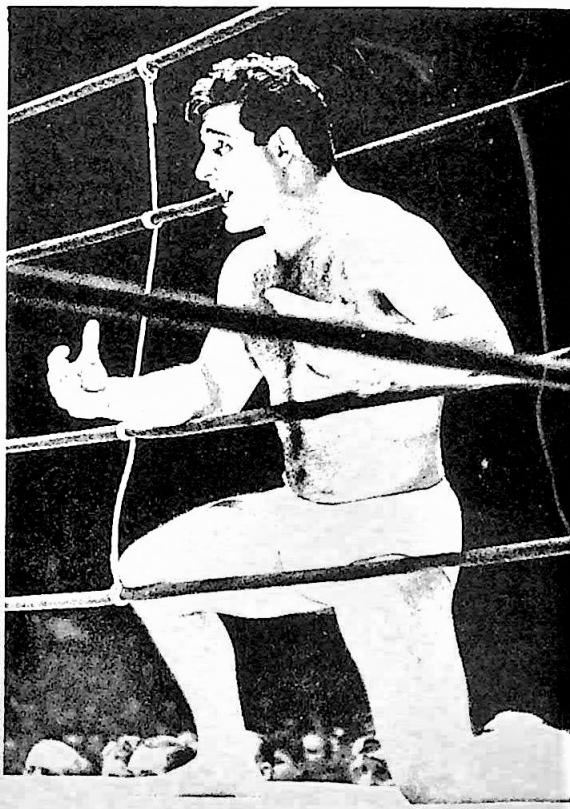


New sensation Apollo displays some of his patented razzle dazzle on Al Costello soon after bout gets under way.

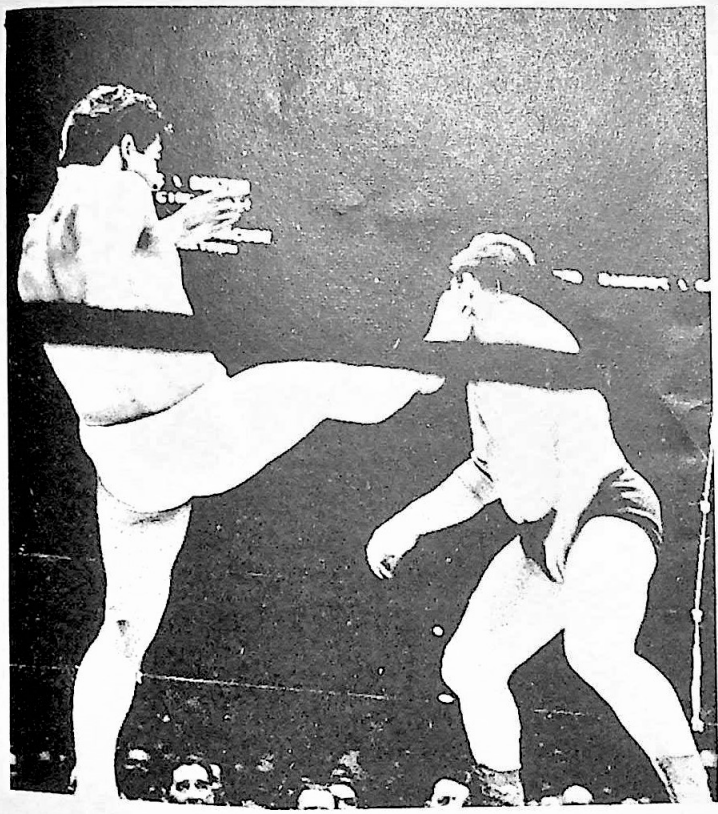


Big Johnny Valentine makes Costello cry out in pain as he increases pressure on punishing armlock.

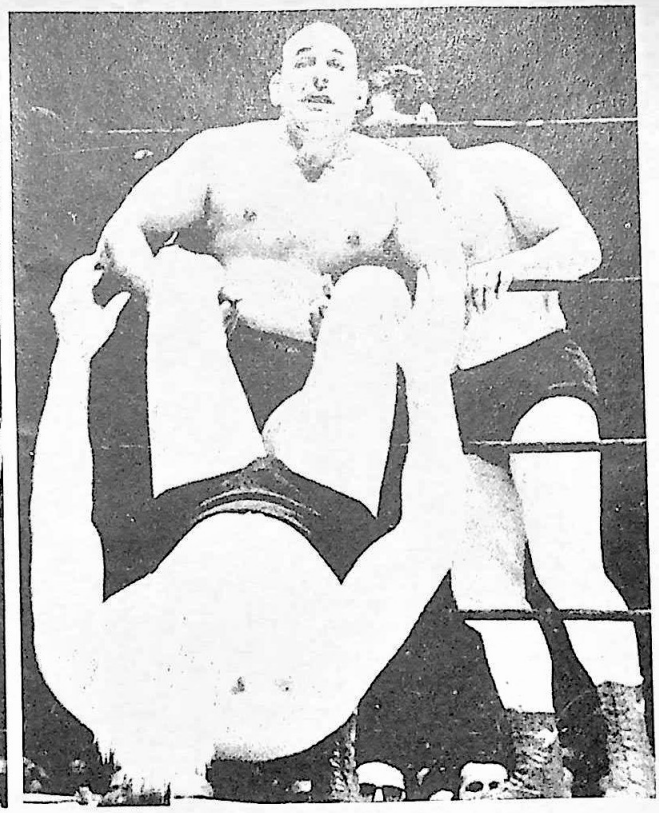
VITTORIO APOLLO and JOHNNY VALENTINE VS. THE KANGAROOS



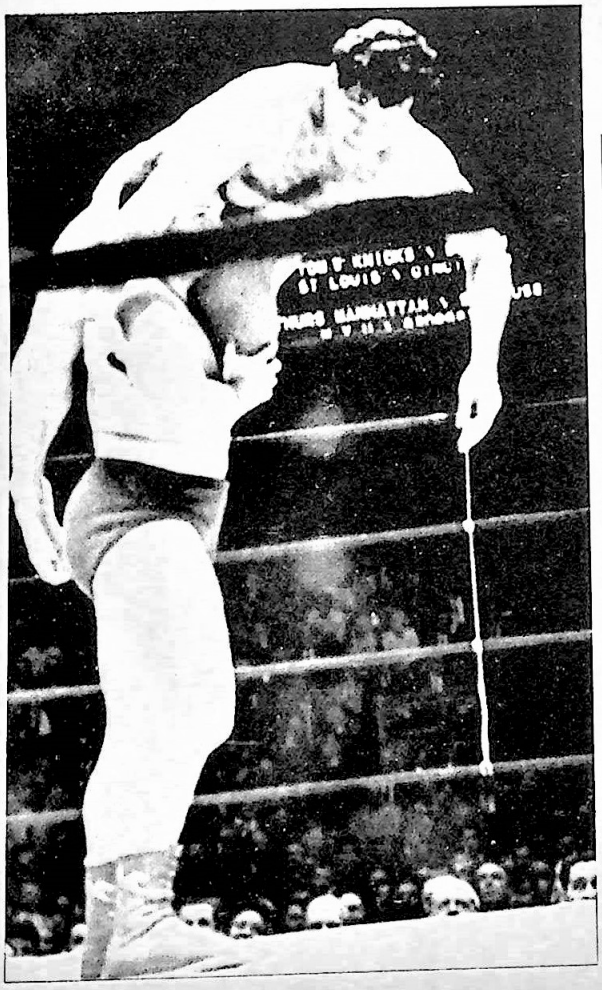
Apollo pleads with his partner, Johnny Valentine, to come within range so he can make tag.

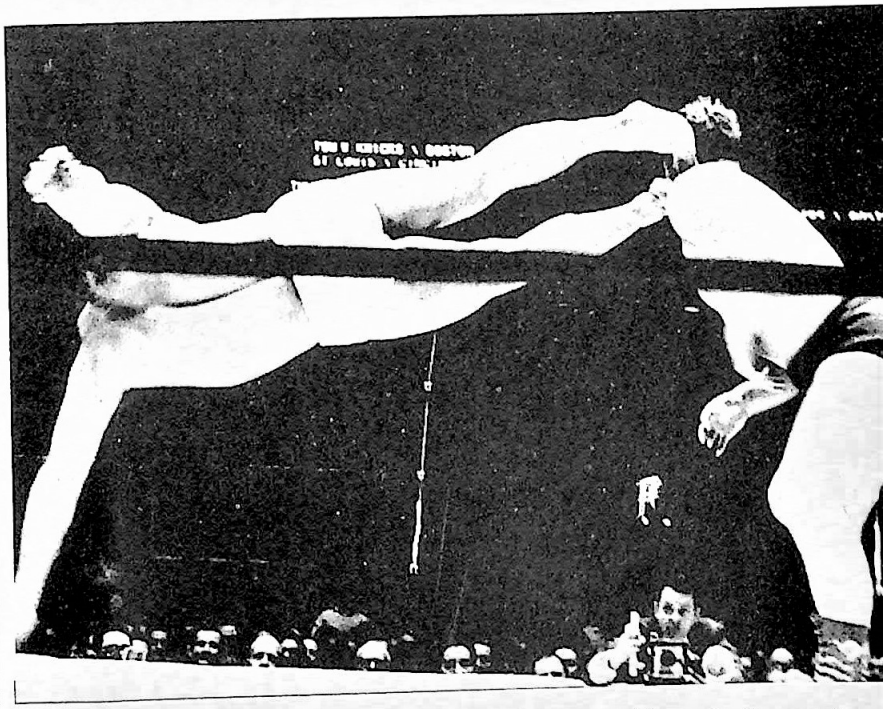


Apollo thrilled the huge crowd with maneuvers such as this. His perfect timing and remarkable agility highlighted show.



Costello catapults Valentine up and over his head and smack into Heffernan's extended right fist.





Photos above and at left show Apollo's striking resemblance to the great Antonino Rocca in both appearance and ring maneuvers. As the great crowd slowly filed out of the Garden people were heard to say, "He must be Rocca's brother." Actually, Vittorio is no relation to Antonino.

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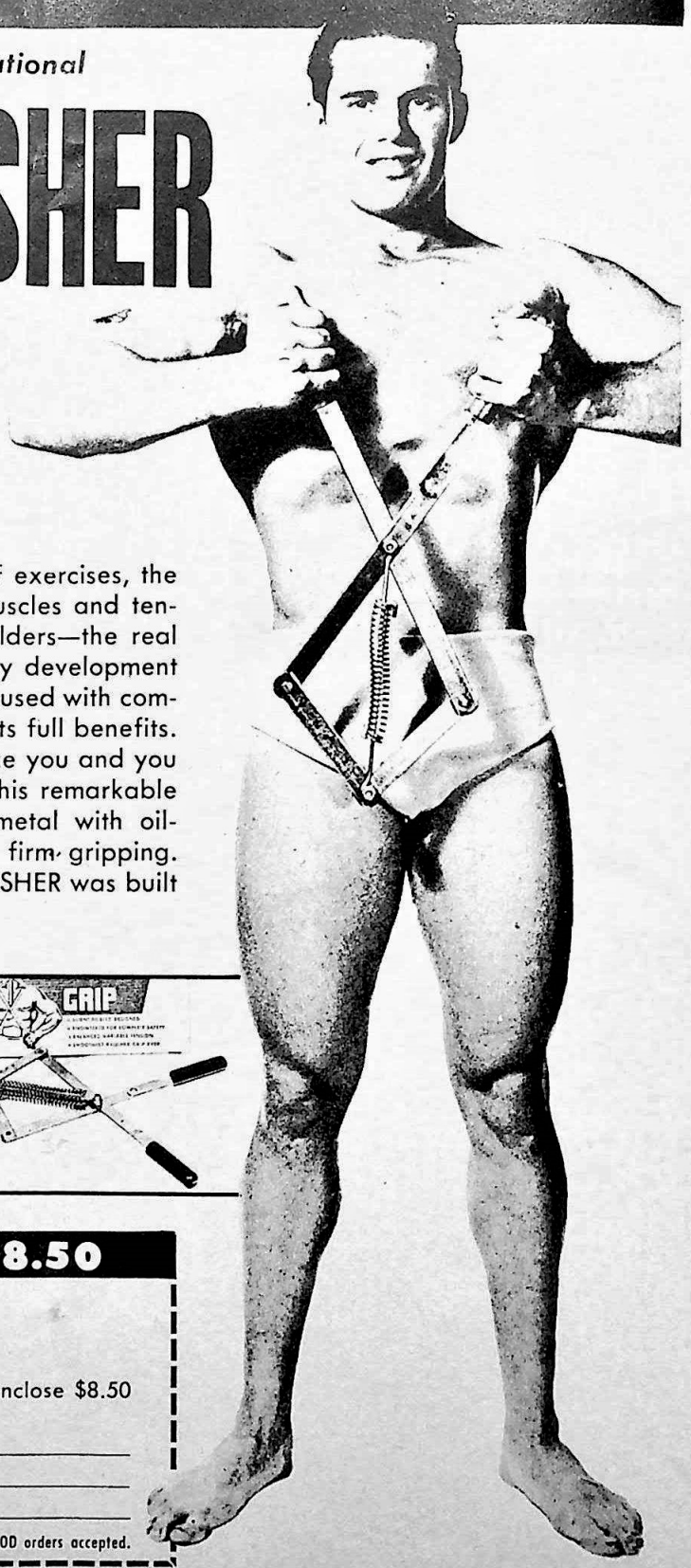

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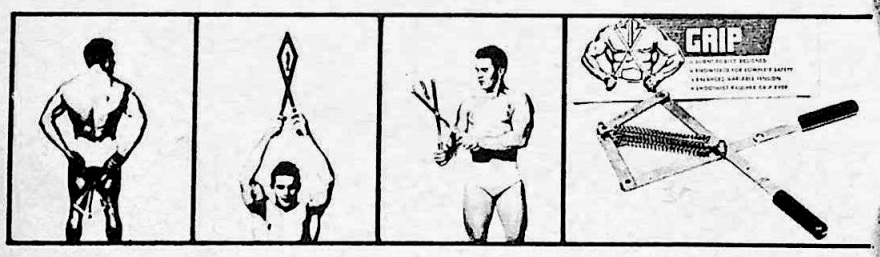

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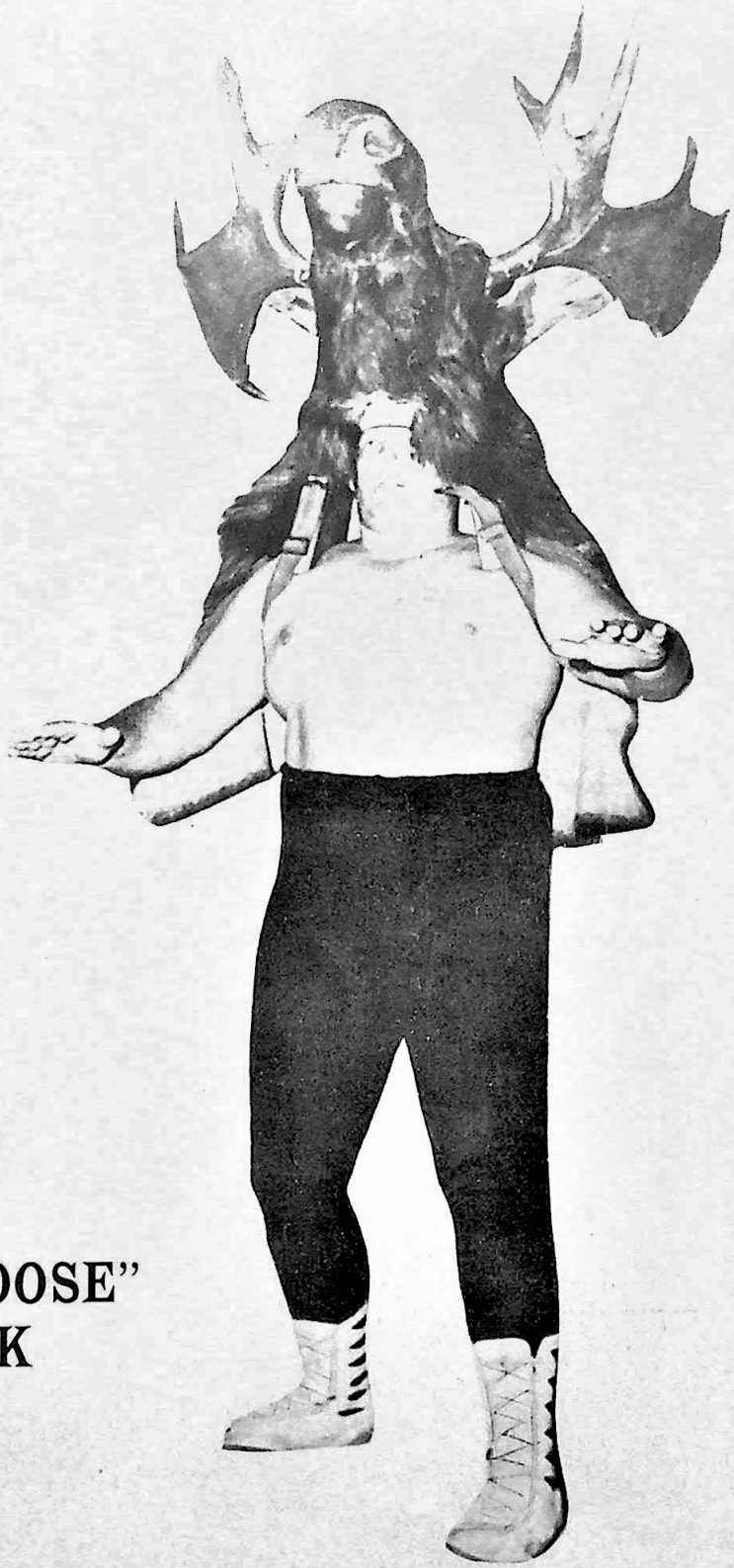

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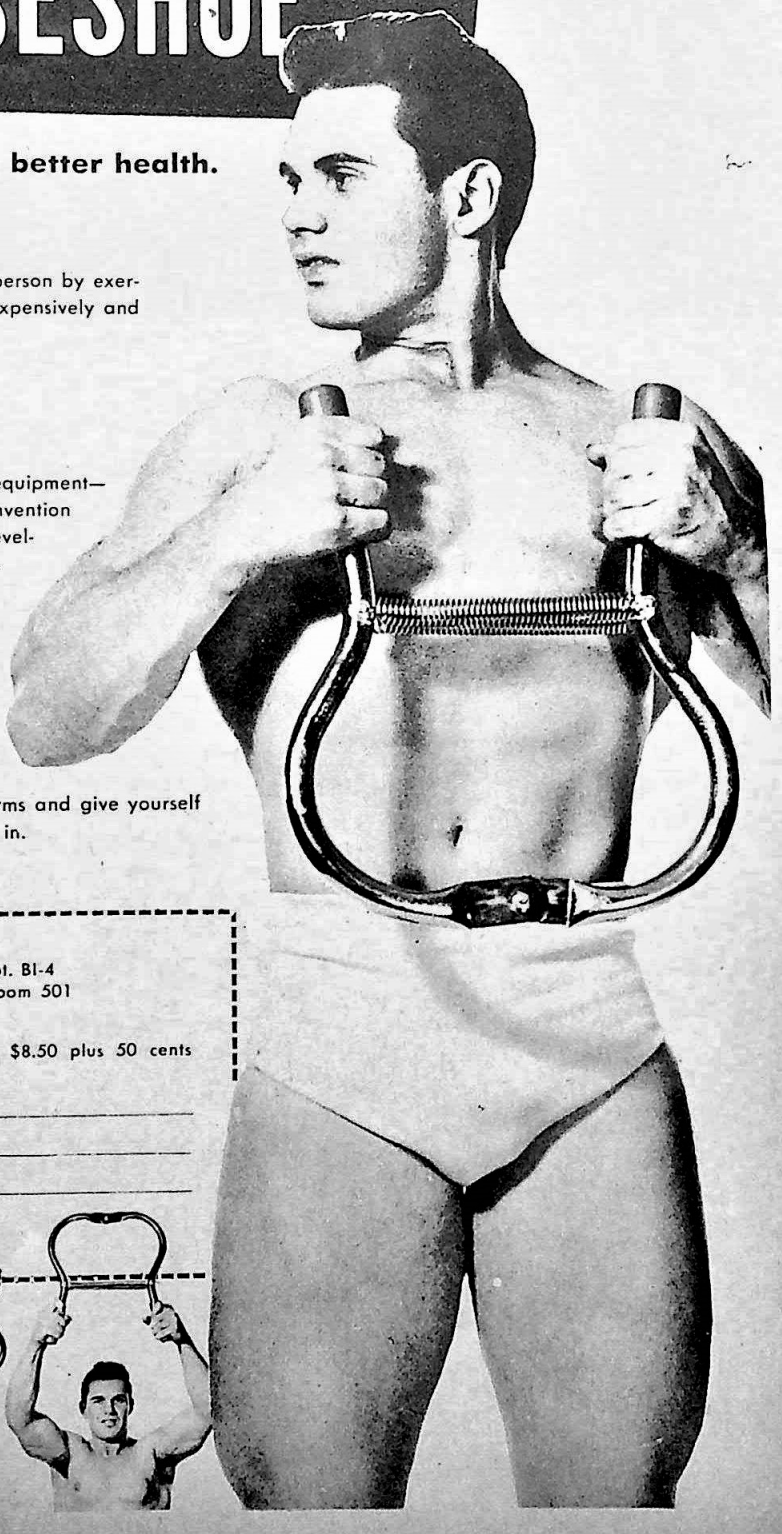

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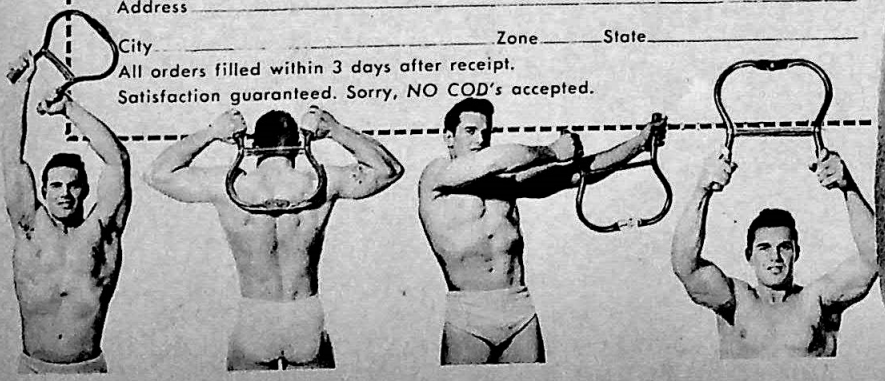
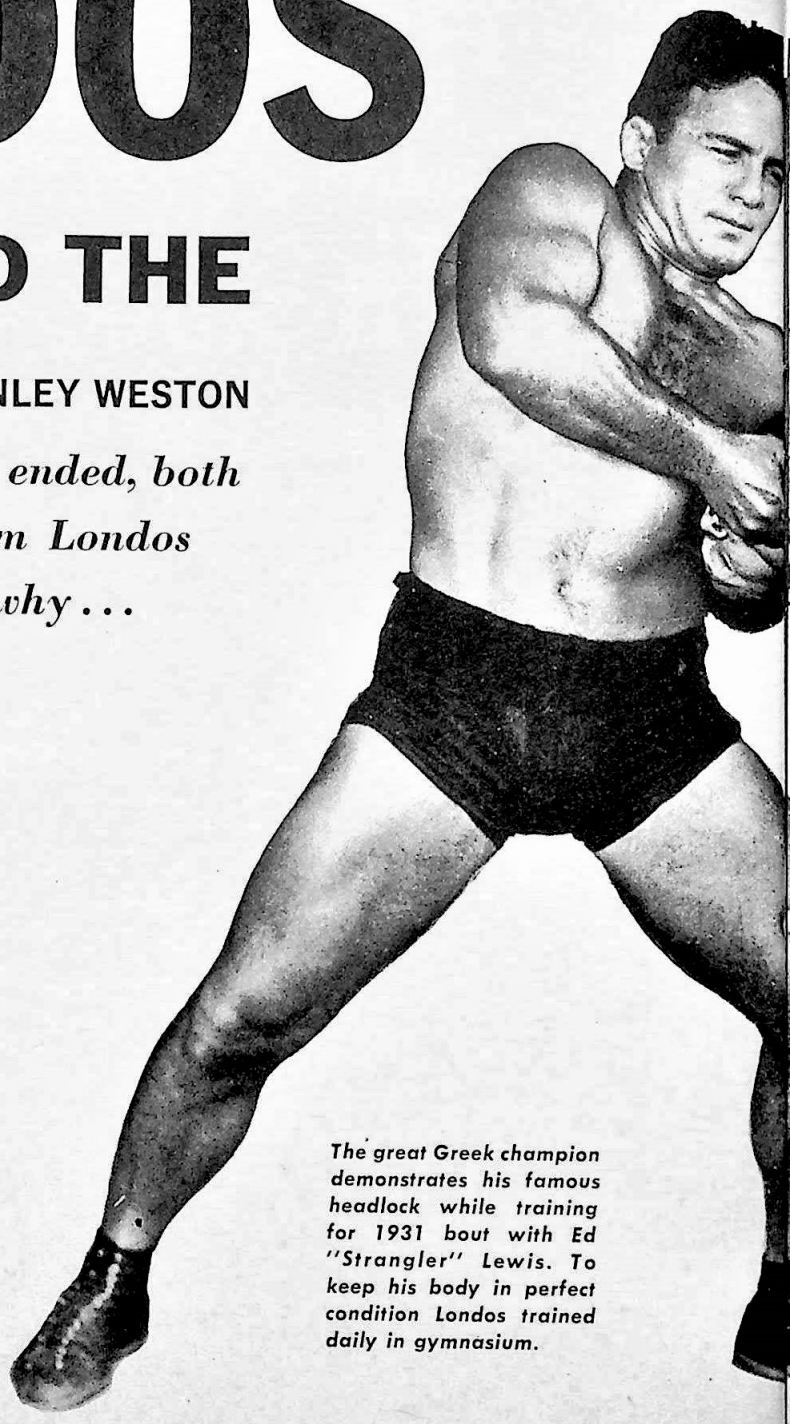


LONDOS

THE MAN AND THE LEGEND

BY STANLEY WESTON

Long after his fabulous career ended, both fans and wrestlers alike put Jim Londos in a class by himself. Here's why . . .



The great Greek champion demonstrates his famous headlock while training for 1931 bout with Ed "Strangler" Lewis. To keep his body in perfect condition Londos trained daily in gymnasium.

SEPTEMBER 20, 1934, was the greatest day in Jim Londos' life. That was the day he defeated Ed "Strangler" Lewis at Chicago's Wrigley Field before a record crowd of 35,265. It was not the crowd that made this day great for Londos, nor the all time record gate of $96,302; nor even the fact that Jimmy got over $30,000 of it—nor even the fact that the Golden Greek retained his world's wrestling championship after one of his toughest bouts in years.

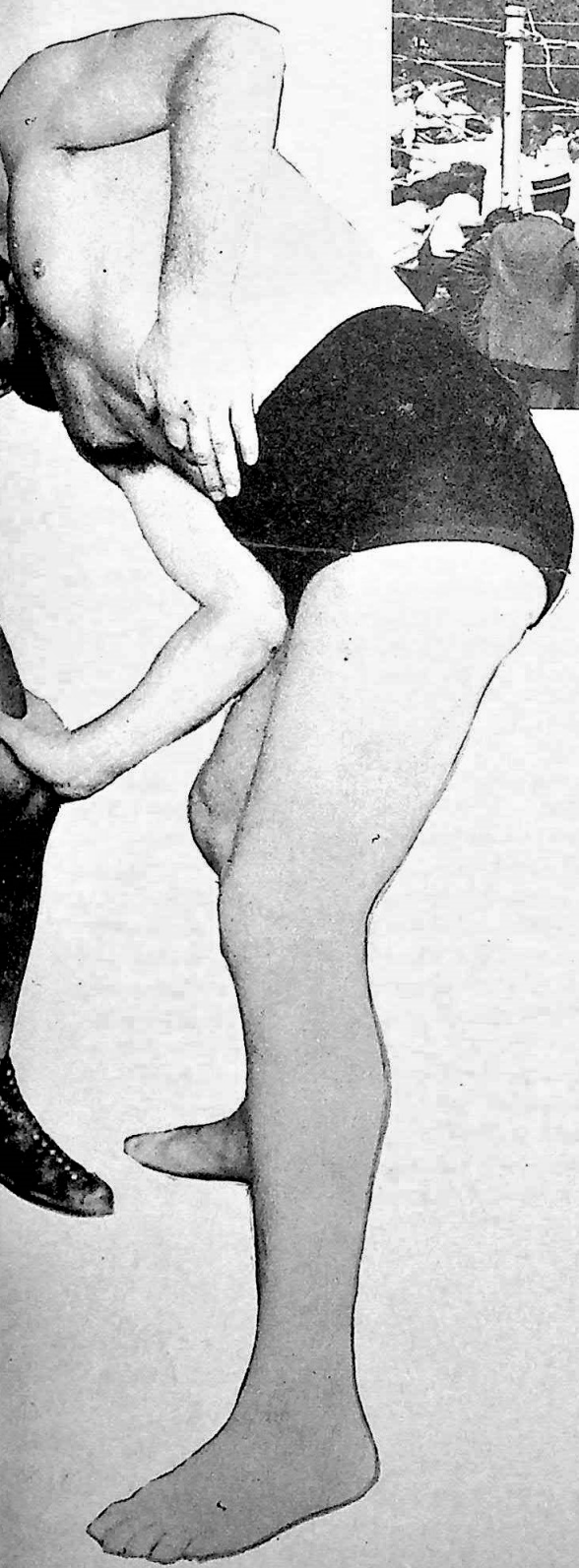
No, the reason was told best in next day's Chicago *Tribune:* "Londos was the defending champion. For four years he has been recognized as such, and gradually he had brought all others under his rule. But not "Strangler" Lewis. Ten years ago Lewis scored his 14th consecutive victory over Londos. Since then time had taken some of the power from the Strangler's clutches, but Londos' detractors still argued that he was an usurper on a throne which rightly belonged to another.

"Last night was Londos' long-awaited opportunity. In one fall, which came after 49 minutes and 27 seconds of wrestling, he wiped out all the sting of the many times he had lost to Lewis. And in so doing Jim fought as courageous and intelligent a campaign as any athlete who lives by skill and strength."

It had taken Jim Londos 15 years and 15 heart-breaking bouts to defeat his arch enemy, who outweighed him by 35 pounds. It was the sweetest victory of a long career that was to continue for another 25 years. The victory itself was a classic of the wrestling art. It took 18 minutes for Lewis to get Londos down, the first time either had been off his feet. But it was a suspenseful 18 minutes, with the catlike agility of Londos and the bullish tactics of the monstrous Lewis keeping the crowd on edge. At the end of this time, Londos was far behind on the official scorecards. Since this was a genuine championship match, the officials were necessary in the event that there be no deciding fall.

At the end of thirty inconclusive minutes, both men lost patience. They began throwing punches and butting. This flare of temper didn't last, since both were basically clean wrestlers.

Twice Londos swept in toward Lewis, seeking to secure a crotch hold. The ropes saved Ed each time. Then the Strangler wrapped his arms around Jimmy's head and leveraged him to the floor. It was typical of the great Lewis, who had reigned for a full generation as king of



The Londos training camp in Philadelphia where he prepared for title bout with German ace Dick Shikat in 1933. Capacity crowds turned out to watch Jimmy work out.

the world's wrestlers. He held Londos down for a minute and a half, as Jim grovelled in agony, before finally twisting free.

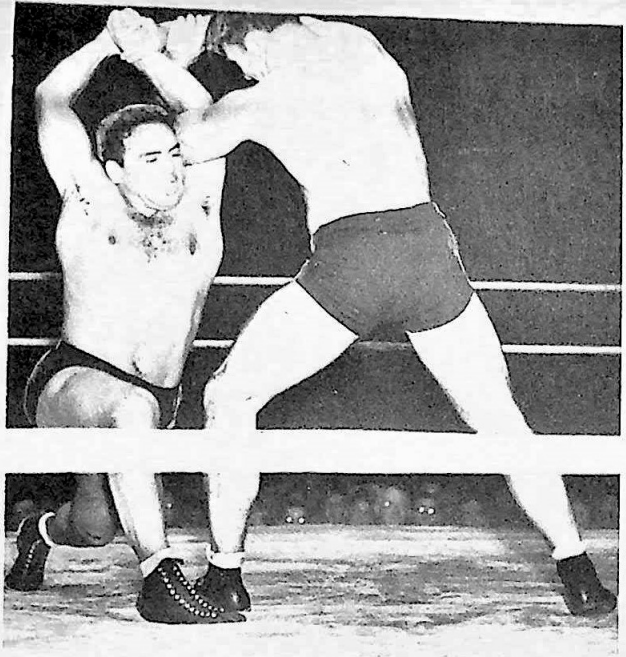
Time began to run out for the 240-pound Lewis after forty minutes. He got Londos in a couple of wristlocks, and he nearly tore the little Greek's head off with another headlock. But after both fell through the ropes in one wild affray, it took Lewis 18 of the allowable twenty seconds to climb back in. Jimmy, still fresh, sensed the inevitable, and to a lesser degree, so did the crowd.

It came as Londos secured a bone-breaking hammerlock. Without as much drama as the excitable witnesses might ask, but with plenty of thrills for the purist, Lewis lay prone, gasping, as Londos switched to a half nelson. Even his great strength was not enough to beat the great Lewis with a single hold. Once the referee began to count, then stopped as Lewis jerked his shoulder off the mat for an instant. But it was a dying effort. A moment later Londos felt a tap on his back. Hardly believing the evidence, he rose to find himself still champion.

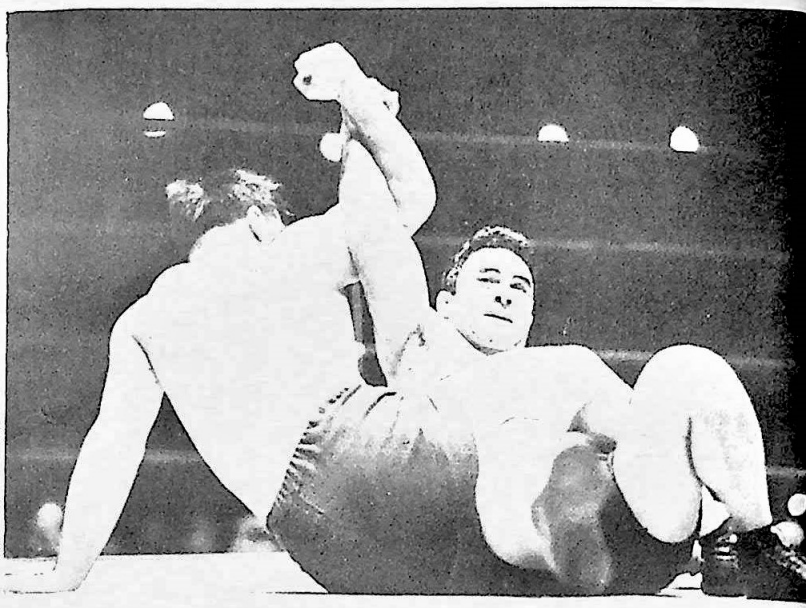
More important, he had conquered Strangler Lewis for the first time in 15 tries.

To the amazement of not only the wrestling world but physical culturists and doctors, Jim Londos continued to wrestle long after his first "retirement" 25 years ago. Into the late 1950's he was still going strong. This year (1961) he turned 63 years of age. The guess is that any of today's active wrestlers, who thinks he has earned the right to be called great, might profit by a trip to Londos' sprawling avocado farm near San Diego. He would doubtless learn much about wrestling.

The rate of Londos' early career stepped up when he was "adopted" by the inimitable Ed White, who is credited by "Jeemy" with a large share of credit for his success. "He rescued me, and when I was discouraged, Ed



Londos, left, demonstrates his tremendous strength by breaking Bronko Nagurski's hold. Jim won bout.



In May 1945, Londos, right, returned to Madison Square Garden after three year absence to defeat tough Ernie Dusek in two straight falls.

gave me the inspiration I needed to keep going."

The first example of White's touch came with Londos' first bout under the astute manager. One day Jim walked into White's office to see the promoter leaning back and staring at the ceiling. "Chris Theophelos," he muttered absently, as though unaware of the young wrestler's presence. "—And his opponent, CHRIS THEOPHELOS!" he shouted this in the stentorian tones of a ring announcer. Then he turned to Londos, whose real name is Chris Theophelos. "How," asked White, "does that sound?"

"Nobody would remember it, not even if I won," admitted Chris.

"Right," said Ed, "so let's change it. Did you ever read 'Call of the Wild?' "

Christ said he had read and enjoyed that book by Jack London, his favorite author.

White said again ignoring Chris, "London — Chris London — no, with your accent, it has to be a Greek name. Chris *Londos?* No, *Jim* Londos!" He leaped to his feet, startling Chris out of his wits. "Presenting the champion of the world—Jim LONDOS!" He turned to Chris. "How does *that* sound?"

Chris smiled broadly. "It sounds great!" And from that moment on, a brilliant new star began his meteoric flight across the starry heavens of wrestling. This all happened after a battle with a dreaded eye disease had all but ended Jimmy's career. With White's encouragement, the young Greek star began his sensational rise.

The coveted "Greek Championship" of New York City went to Londos in 1920—his first important recognition. By 1922, the handsome, muscular youth had bested such luminaries as Charley Cutler, Jess Westerguard, Joe Stecher, Hussane the Turk, Earl Caddock and most of the other postwar stars. In just three years the "little fellow" had risen to the top of his profession.

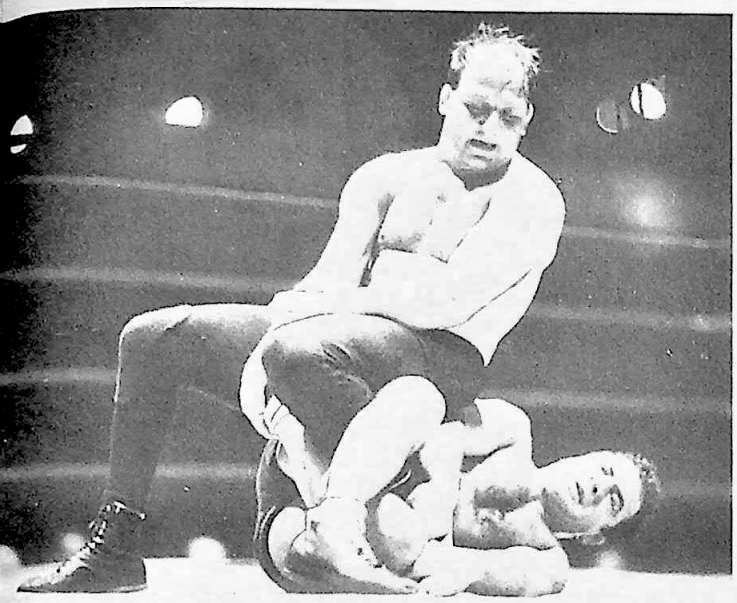
It was Ed White who taught Jim the value of showmanship. During this transitional era between the old, strait-laced brand of wrestling as exploited by Frank Gotch and Farmer Burns, and the spectacular showmen seen in today's rings.The name stars across the country molded themselves to the new standards, reaping scads of money and delighting the fans. The "Roaring Twenties," like today's jet age, demanded something beside mere grunts, groans and science.

One of the big crowd-pleasers was Joe Stecher's incredible scissors stunt. He would seize a sack of grain between his legs—in the ring—and squeeze it until it burst, cascading grain onto the canvas. Another sensation of the era was Ed Don George, who was carried into the ring nailed inside a barrel. When his opponent climbed into the ring, George would kick out the barrel staves and emerge to do battle. The crowds loved such stunts as these—but they also loved good wrestling. The wrestlers gave them a mixture of the two. Just as they do today.

As for Jim Londos, he had no special tricks or shenanigans. He simply capitalized on his magnificent body and colorful personality. "The Golden Greek" they called him, and he was indeed as rare as the purest wrought gold. Short—only 5 feet six, although the press agents built him up a bit—and weighing about 200 pounds, he had one of the finest physiques ever seen in the ring. And his strength was phenomenal. No one could withstand the intense leverage of his arms and body—and no one but a scientist could explain it.

Nor is it easy to explain just what it was that Londos had that made him so immensely popular—except the above qualities in great quantities, aided by an amiable personality, caught the crowd in a vise and made them cheer his every move, his every word. The fact that this inexplicable quality has endured for nearly half a century is proof of its power. He was just "Jeemy" to millions of people, a magnetic, lovable star who knocked them dead. That's all.

Things like the following were typical of Londos, and made people love him even more. A fanatic on health and physical culture, Londos carried it to the point of



Dick Shikat, top, always gave Jim trouble. But in this bout, in New York, Dec. 1934, Londos was winner in one hour 33 min.

drinking nothing but olive oil. In restaurants he would gulp down vitamin pills. Once he went back to the kitchen of a prominent New York eateric to find out how many calories the chef's special salad contained. The volatile chef swore later that anyone else but Londos would have got his hair parted with a meat cleaver.

Says Londos today, just as he said forty years ago: Anyone who wants to be strong and healthy should drink at least a half cup of olive oil daily. (We say that's just fine for people in the plus-ten-grand-a-year bracket. We ordinary people can achieve the same results with ordinary cooking oil.)

To give an account of the many important matches that spiked the career of Jim Londos from 1922 to his ascent to the champion's throne in 1930 would fill a book. It is enough to say that he wrestled "them all" and beat them—all except Dick Shikat, who was the first to pin Jim in five years. A year after his defeat by Shikat —another truly great wrestler—the two met again for the title. It was a chance Londos deserved.

It is looked upon, that June 8th match between Shikat and Londos, as one of the best of the 1920's—which means the best of any time. It was filled with assorted thrills, throat catching suspense, a wealth of science and some brutality. Shikat, knowing that the monetary value of his title was almost a million dollars, fought desperately to keep it. Londos, feeling that the title was rightfully his, in view of his all-but-spotless record for five years, fought back just as hard. Even harder!

Most of it was done in a driving rain that drenched both wrestlers and spectators in Philadelphia, that day, but did not dampen their enthusiasm or the caliber of the wrestling. The tide of battle shifted from one to the other, with Shikat showing his championship form in the early part of the match, but weakening under the relentless attacks of the challenger.

After roughing up the exhausted and battered Shikat with a Japanese headlock, Londos finally beat the champion after one hour and 56 hectic minutes.

There were many good days for Jim Londos after that, but it is generally acknowledged that his peak years were from about 1928 to 1934. In '32, for example, when asked whether he could beat Jimmy, Strangler Lewis replied with a grin, "If we were to go down to the gym right now, Londos would beat me; but if we were to wait a week, and let him think about it, I'd beat him."

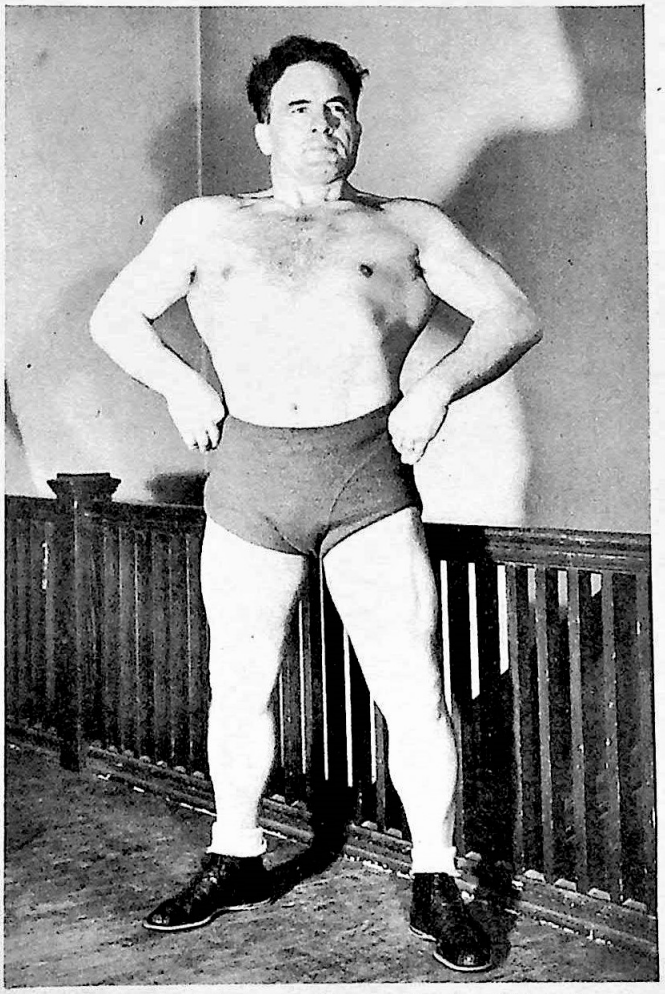
Without doubt, the best appraisal of a man's worth is in what his contemporaries think of him. Here is the worth of Jim Londos, told by the men he wrestled:

Joe Stecher: "Strangler Lewis was the toughest man I ever wrestled, John Pesek was the craftiest—but Jim Londos was the *best*."

Ad Santell, former light heavyweight champion and on all lists of immortals: "Londos I met twice. There was none better."

Ed Don George, who wrestled both Londos and Shikat in 1934: "Both were great—but Londos was better. He refused to give up. The thirty-five pounds advantage I had over Jim didn't seem to make any difference."

The final look at Jim Londos presents this picture: Above all the other wrestlers since Milo of Crotona stands three figures—the best of them all. Supply your own faces for two of them—whether Gotch, Lewis, Zbyszko, Hackenschmidt or Gama—one thing is certain: One of the three must be Jim Londos. •

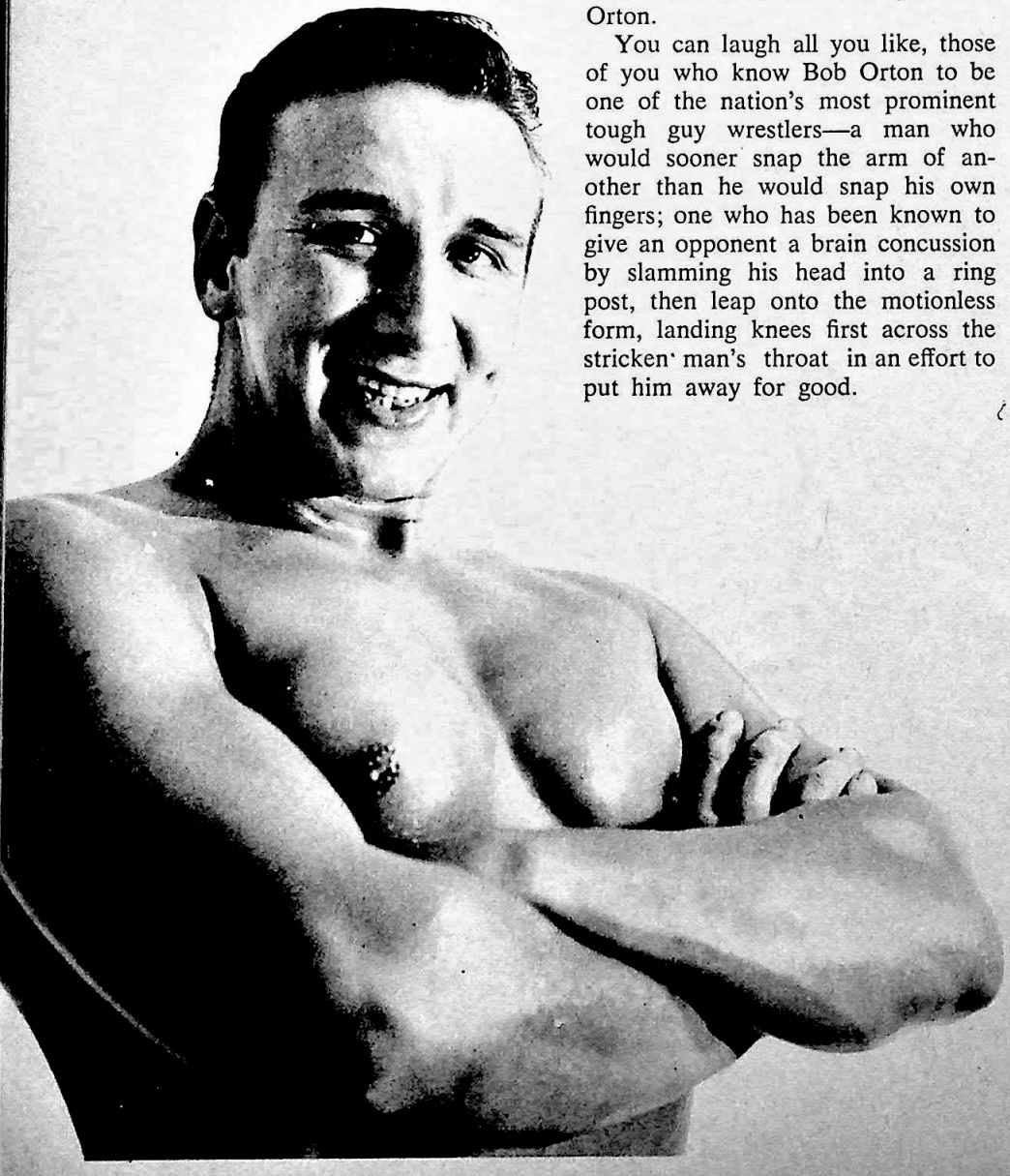


Age seemed to have no effect on Londos. This is how he looked in 1949, after he easily beat Yukon Eric.

BY HUBERT PATRICK

WATCH OUT FOR THE BIG "O"

Wrestlers from coast to coast learned to treat towering Bob Orton with respect a long time ago. They know he's one guy you can't take chances with.



THIS IS THE STORY of a man who has one of the most important jobs in the world—to many people, *the* most important. It is the story of a man who has graciously helped the sick and needy, listened to many a tale of woe, prevented bloodshed scores of times, and contributed much of his efforts in the direction of doing good for others.

It's the story of a bartender.

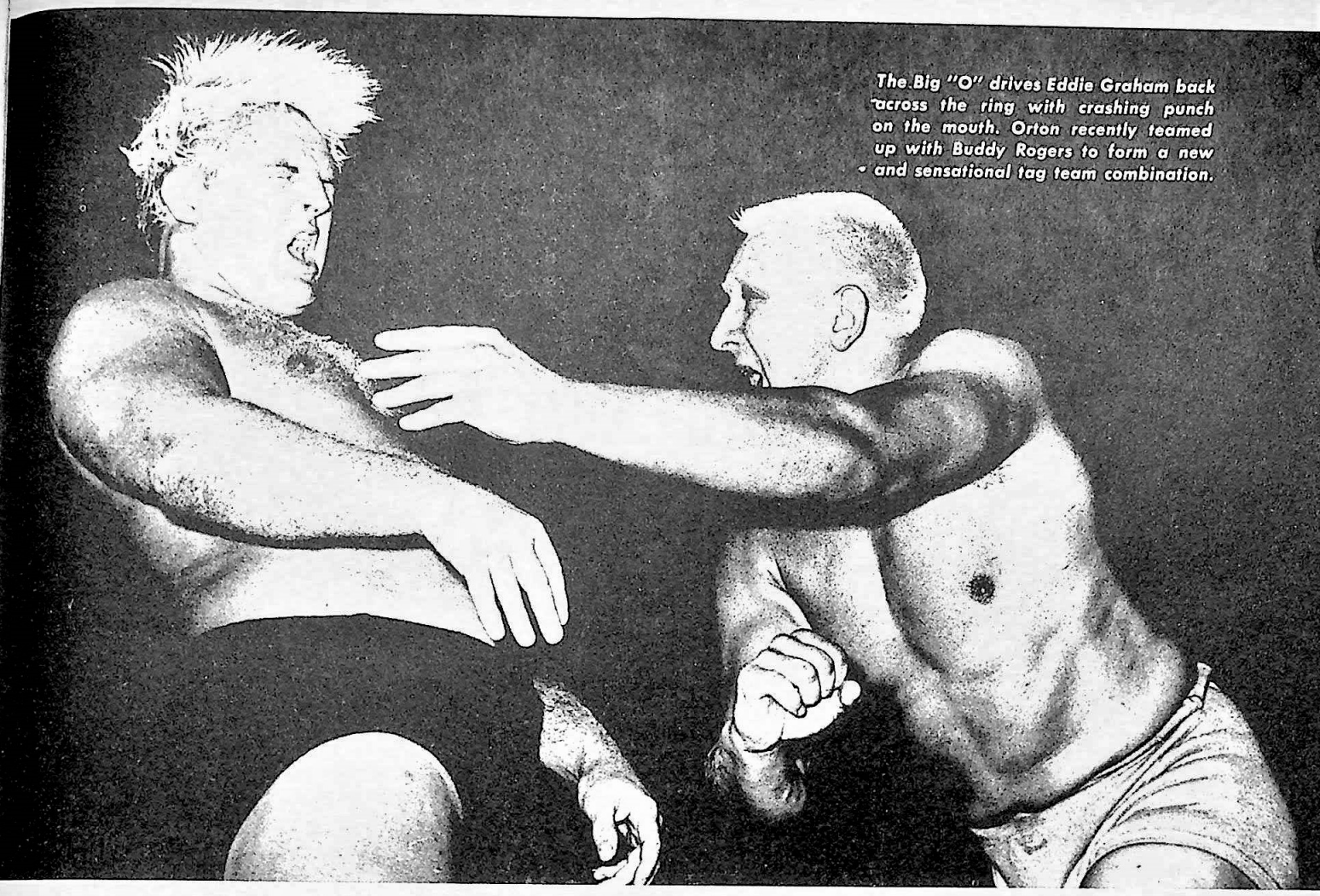
To be exact, it is the story of Bob Orton.

You can laugh all you like, those of you who know Bob Orton to be one of the nation's most prominent tough guy wrestlers—a man who would sooner snap the arm of another than he would snap his own fingers; one who has been known to give an opponent a brain concussion by slamming his head into a ring post, then leap onto the motionless form, landing knees first across the stricken man's throat in an effort to put him away for good.

What we're trying to say, if you'll stop laughing long enough to listen, is that Robert Orton, often called "The Big O," is actually two people —and he's big enough for that, too. When he's not trying to rip a ring foe's arms out of their sockets, Bob is usually tending bar, and doubling as bouncer, in his Dad's Kansas City bar and grill. This is good for trade, provided the customers mind their manners, and, as Bob says, "It gives me some relaxation between my tours. Don't get me wrong, I'm not saying that wrestling is a hard-to-take grind. It's not. I really enjoy it. It's the traveling that gets me down. You try driving from Kansas City to Albuquerque, wrestling the night you arrive, then leave at midnight and start driving to make a show in Houston the next night. You take a day's rest, then start all over again. That's why coming back here to work in the bar for a couple of days is like a Paris vacation to the average housewife."

Bob is well known for his bar tending (and bouncing) around Kansas City, where local toughs sometime drop into Orton's Bar to see just how tough a professional wrestler really is. They figure they're protected by the law, to a degree, since it is a well known fact that a professional boxer or wrestler is charged for "attack with a deadly weapon" if he strikes somebody outside the ring. But what is not generally known is that while engaged in a form of legal employment which could involve force, the athlete in question need not worry about the deadly weapon rap. The tough guys find this out within a few seconds after they begin baiting big Bob.

"I've never had any trouble handling punks," says Orton, who is a handsome blond of 230 pounds at 6 feet 4. "What the average person fails to realize is the tremendous physical superiority a professional wrestler, or fighter, has over the man-



The Big "O" drives Eddie Graham back across the ring with crashing punch on the mouth. Orton recently teamed up with Buddy Rogers to form a new and sensational tag team combination.

in-the-street. Take a big truck driver or a husky factory worker. Among his kind he's tough, sure. But just how athletic is he? What does he do to keep his body in shape? And how often does he go through an hour long battle in which he trys to defend himself and murder the other guy all at the same time?

"When the truck driver or the factory worker goes up against a pro he's so outclassed it's a joke. Hell, we wrestlers earn our living slugging, kicking, suffering through tortureous holds, fighting for our lives! We do it night after night. C'mon," Orton made a sweeping motion with his massive arm, "I can show you a couple of examples of what I'm talking about right now—it won't take but a minute."

Bob and this writer stood across the bar from each other. We wrist wrestled. The writer, who used to both wrestle and box, was like a baby in Orton's hammy hand. Then Bob came out from behind the bar. He stood up straight and said, "Go ahead, hit me—right in the belly—as hard as you can."

I figured I could still hit, since a man's punch is the last fighting attribute to leave him. So I hit him, gently at first. It didn't do more than bring a grin to Orton's face. "Go ahead," said the baby-faced bruiser, "Give it all you've got!"

I put everything behind a short left hook.

The Big O laughed out loud. "That would have knocked down, maybe kayoed, any ordinary guy. Now you see?"

The writer "saw." He saw, after an afternoon interview, that Bob Orton comes by his toughness naturally. His father sometimes had to leave the tavern, when Bob was young, and Mrs. Orton would take over. She also took over the bouncing chores, as well. Bob has seen her put the whammy on more than one obstreperous bar fly and heave him out on his ear. "She taught me all I know," admits Bob—"about the tavern business, anyway. After I got old enough, I took her job.

"I got so good at it a lot of Kansas City fighters suggested that I turn boxer. Of course, the St. Louis Cardinals ball team thought I should try out for big league ball—and the wrestlers all thought I was nuts not to go into wrestling. The wrestlers won. Why? More money. Right now, at 31, I've got enough put away to retire. When I do, I may come back here for good. Or maybe not. My folks don't need any help, and I've learned something about the world. There's a lot out there to do. And by the time I'm forty, I'll still have my health—and be able to do some of those wonderful things. You know, travel deluxe, see the Pyramids, open a motel on Route 66—oh, lots of things."

When Bob first decided to fight for

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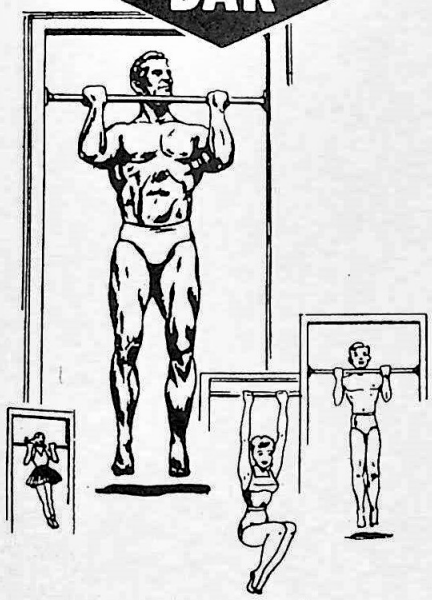

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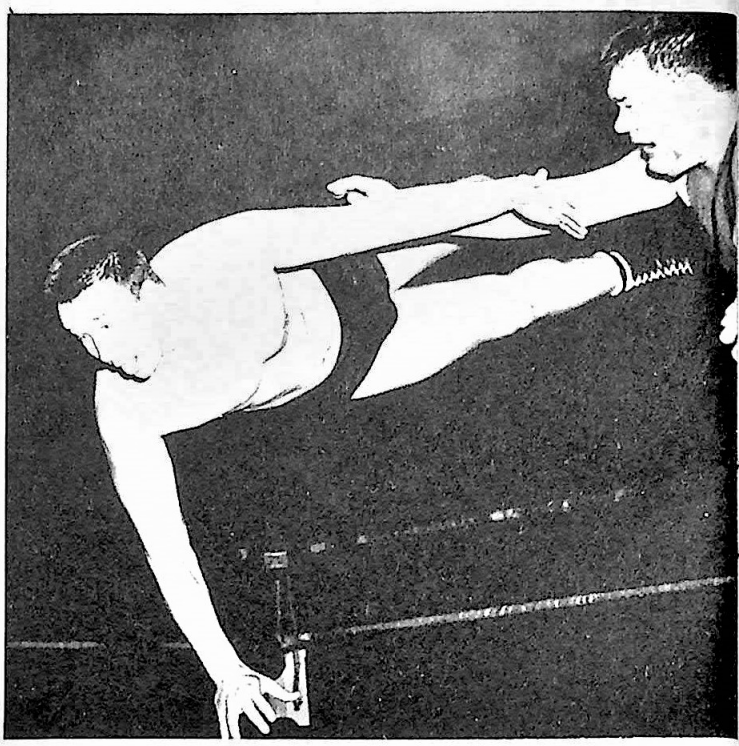
Orton misses drop kick aimed at the head of massive, 280-pound Cowboy Rocky Lee during bout in Texas. But The Big "O" came back to win with a series of hammerlocks.



BIG "O"

money instead of kicks, he found out "the difference between the men and the boys." He couldn't get anywhere in Kansas City. "Sure, you're tough," said the local promoter, "but any pro coming in here would make you look silly—not to mention me. Why not go south—say Florida—until you learn the business. Also, if you want to get out of the business in a hurry, you won't be embarrassed in your own home town."

It was good advice. After a year of sweating it out in southern rings and on southern beaches, Orton felt he was ready to make his Kansas City debut. So did the Florida promoter. And so did the K.C. promoter who had been watching Orton's progress with great interest.

For his first big time match, they put him in with "Dirty" Dick Raines, a toughie of the worst stripe. Bob, at that time a black-haired, gentle soul with the face of a choir boy, found he had to not only wrestle, but really fight! Raines showed him no mercy.

And Bob didn't ask for any. He held Raines to a draw, so pleasing the fans, the promoter and his father that there was no doubt about it—he was a wrestler. "Come back," said the elder Orton, "and work the bar whenever you like—but I know I've lost you to bigger and better things."

Orton was a hero until the night he met murderous Ernie Dusek, a few years after his debut. Ernie, one of the roughest grapplers in history, messed Bob up so badly that it tore all the illusions from the scientific-minded young wrestler—along with much of his flesh. After he healed, Bob made a vital decision.

"I still was a decent guy underneath—on the outside, I mean—but in the ring I kept thinking of how Dusek nearly killed me. Whenever I got into a match, from then on, I kept worrying about whether the next guy would do it to me again. I swore not to give him a chance. I did it to him first!"

It's been like that ever since—only worse. Orton has gone so far to the other extreme that he is considered one of the most vicious, hateful—and dangerous—men in the ring today. He seems to enjoy hurting his opponents—and maybe he does. A man can change his basic nature under certain circumstances. Orton, after six years of villainy, may have changed his.

In the ring, that is. In the tavern in K.C., where he works as part-time bouncer, it's different. There he merely seizes some wise guy by the neck, now and then, and dislocates his arm, or gives him a tin ear, or bloodies his nose. But this is necessary to maintain peace and quiet.

You can see the Big O's heart isn't in it. ●

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WE won't go so far as to say that wrestling actually got started in the Fall of 1959 — but our readers tell us that America's most popular sport began to take on a new, more exciting flavor about that time. We don't think it was a mere coincidence that WRESTLING REVUE was born in the Fall of 1959.

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Many attribute WRESTLING REVUE's phenomenal success to the quality of its photographs (about 150 in each issue). Others give credit to our policy of getting the story **behind the story.** Our reporters are never content to sit down at their typewriters before they know **everything** about the individual they are writing about. They must know the complete details of the subject's life, his likes, his dislikes, his personal opinions on such topics as wrestling fans, marriage, and children. WRESTLING REVUE is the only publication which actually makes the reader feel as if he knows the subject personally.

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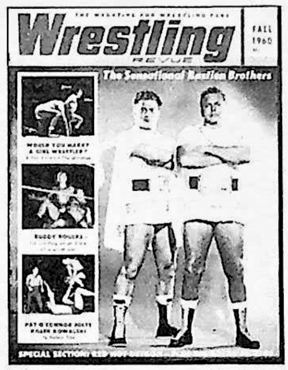

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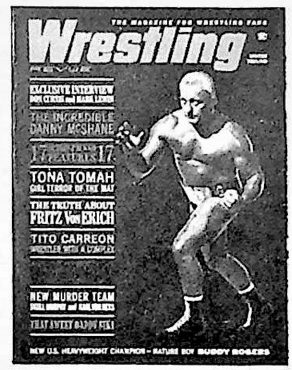

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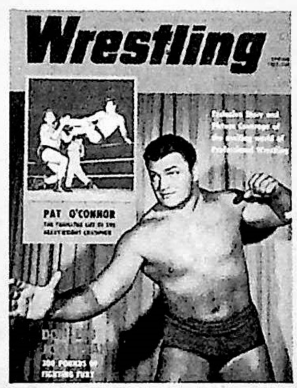

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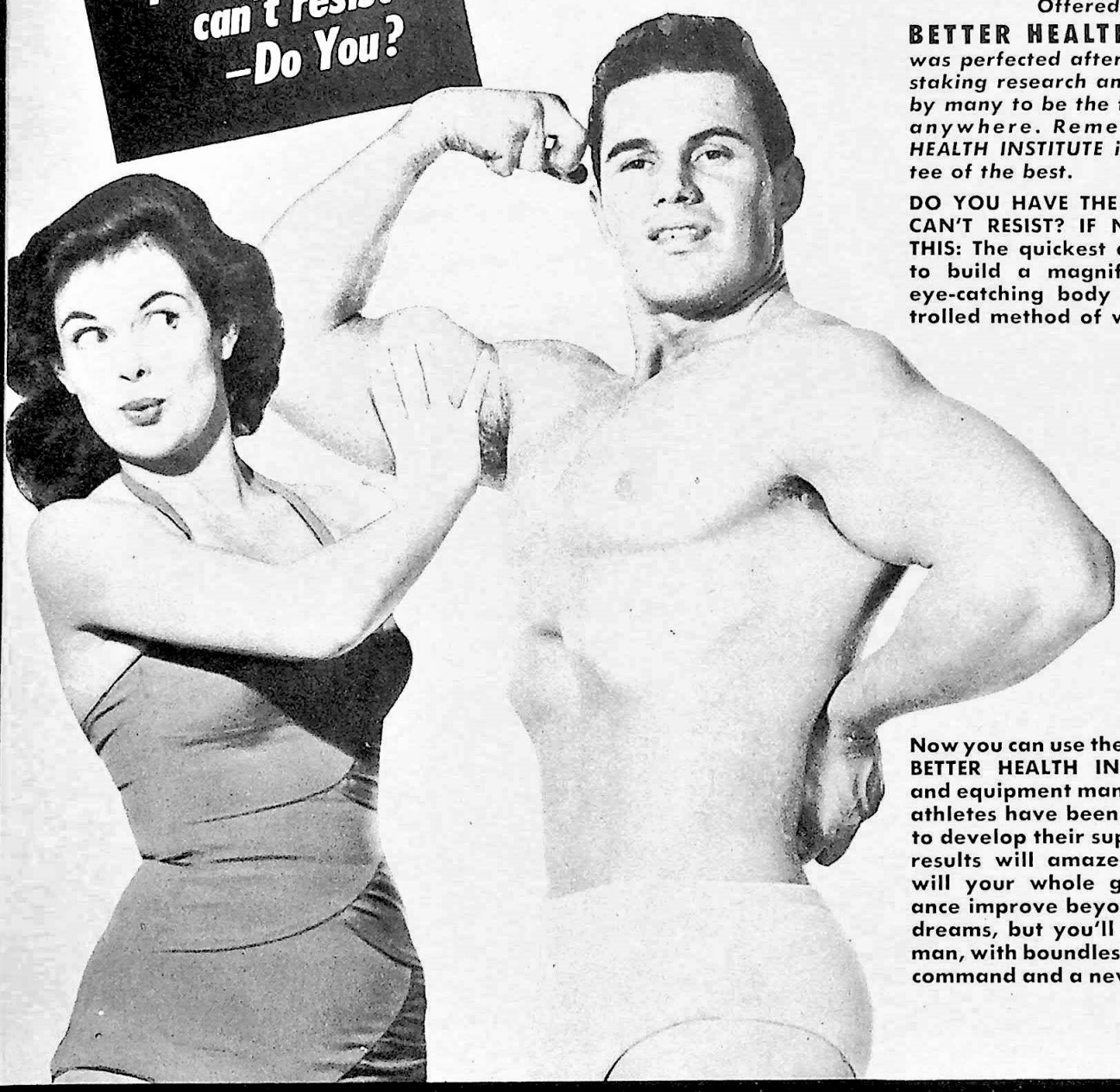

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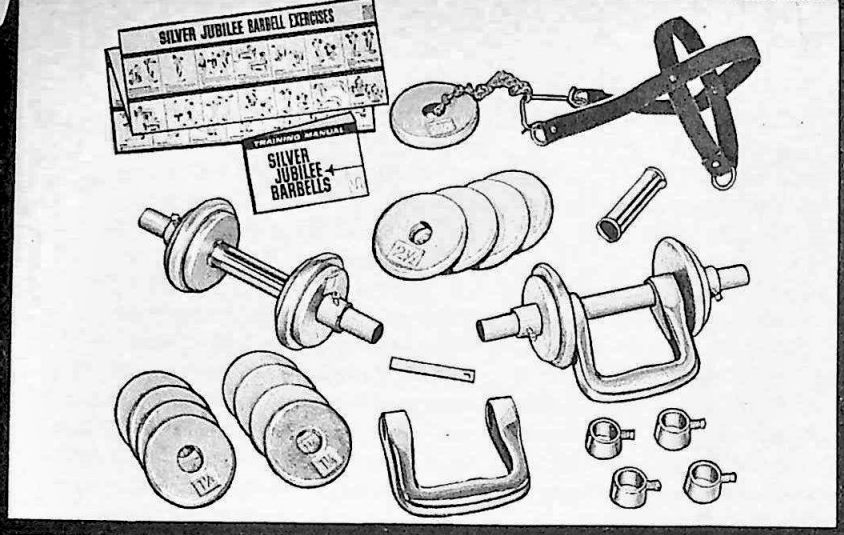

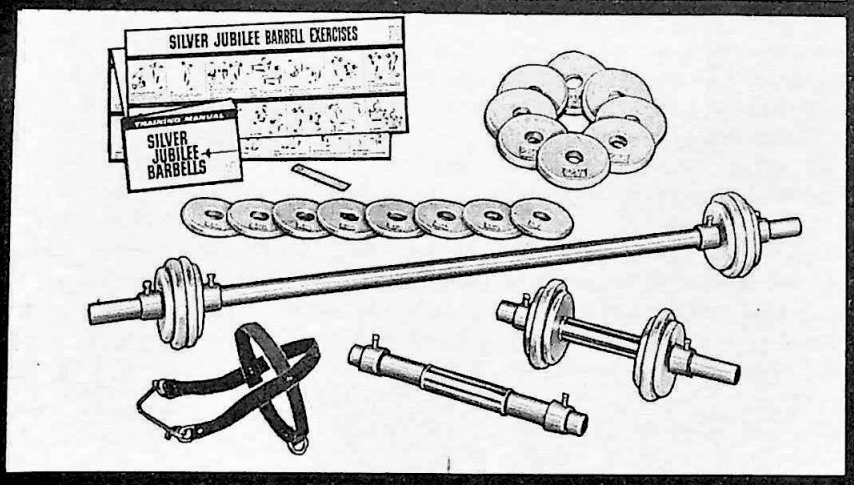

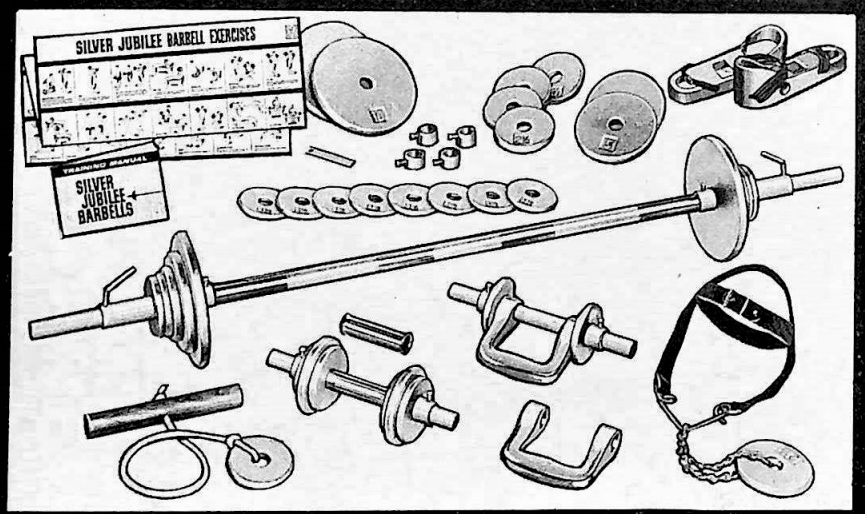

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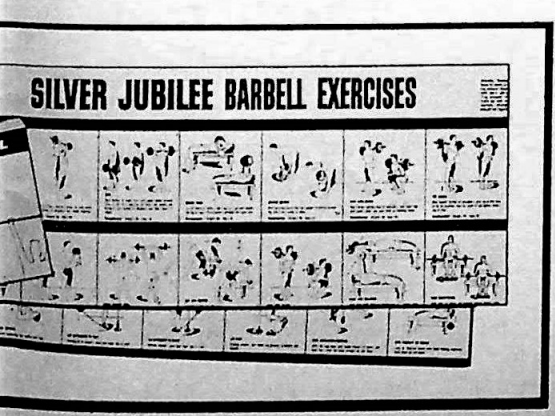

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Ellis and his magnificent horse, "Mick."

BOB ELLIS

(*continued from page* 30)

along to the top. It was not Lewis, however, who started the young man on his way. That honor falls to another former champion Sandor Szabo, the great Hungarian. He too has a few words to say about one of his favorite subjects — Bob Ellis.

"Well," said Sandor, still active in wrestling on the West Coast, "one day, while driving through Texas — this was back in 1954 — I came across this cowboy riding down the highway near San Angelo. Passing him in a breeze, I paid no attention. Then, the luckiest break of this kid's life happened — I got a blowout. Stopping, I got out and got ready for a hot, dusty tire change. Everything was just fine except I'd lost the jack handle. There was nothing to do but hike five miles to the nearest garage. Was I happy? No."

But Sandor was happy a few minutes later, though — and shocked. For the cowboy he'd passed caught up, took in the situation at a glance, got off his horse and said, "Hang on, partner — maybe we can improvise."

The young man walked along the roadside fence for a way, his eyes fixed on the ground. The only thing that Szabo noticed up till then was that the cowpoke was exceptionally handsome, with a good, sturdy jaw. Also, under his tight-fitting shirt, he obviously had an exceptional build.

"Here we are!" came a shout. The kid picked up a rusty shoe thrown by some rider's horse. "Then," says Sandor, "he hauled at the shoe, bent it completely straight, stuck one end in the jack and — just like that, he had my big Cadillac in the air and the wheel changed. Something told me that this was no ordinary cowboy!"

Szabo was right. A short conversation revealed that Robert Ellis was a genuine cowboy, alright; a football player with a contract on the famous Philadelphia Eagles team, an excellent weight lifter, a war hero, a young man with a trigger-fast brain — and a genuine love for wrestling. It all added up to something extra special. Old pro Szabo was greatly interested.

"I worked with him," the former champion said, "until I knew he was good. It took about a year. Then, in 1955, I let him take the bit in his teeth. 'Cowboy' Bob was born!"

Cowboy Bob "Elliott", that is. Since he still was not sure of what success he might expect in his new business — and because he was a little shy for a hero — Bob tried out under the psuedonym at first. He was successful for those first few months, but he didn't set the Texas prairies on fire.

Today, Ellis does a little soul-searching when analyzing his delayed action in getting off the ground. "I guess I didn't want to be a wrestler bad enough to really make it — at that time, I mean. I had a chance to play pro football after doing pretty well at McMurry College, and there was the "Square Circle" — the ranch — to take up my time. What I needed was something, or someone, to light the fuse. I needed inspiration."

He got it. He got it one night when Ed Lewis, the old "Strangler" himself, saw him wrestle in a small Texas arena. Lewis was in the crowd incognito and Bob was flabbergasted to see his idol appear magically in the dressing room. "It was," says Bob, "like seeing Eisenhower walk in and say Howdy. I just sat there and stared at him like a school kid."

Bob was, in short, inspired. Lewis, as he has done with so many other top-notch wrestlers, took charge of the young man's destiny. The name of Elliott was discarded. "You got a name, a good one," said the Strangler with authority, "— and you're going to make your old man proud of it. *Use* it! And you need more fire. You got to give off steam when you walk into that ring. The people in the front rows have to *feel* the heat. You got to be red *hot!*"

Talk like this, coming from a man like Lewis, was all Bob needed. Five years ago, Cowboy Bob Ellis burst on the wrestling scene like a Roman Candle. Ed Lewis taught him tricks of showmanship; he also gave him countless hints on the science of wrestling—little short cuts and devices that had helped carry the old warrior to the top of the heap almost a half dozen times when he had to contend with demi-gods like Londos, Zbyszko, Stecher and the rest.

Now it all came to the test—and Cowboy Bob bucked the gantlet with flying colors. He started to carve a rosy path through the ranks of leading wrestlers that culminated, a couple of years later, when he met then-champion Dick Hutton for the latter's title. For so young a star to have clinched this singular honor is testimony to the Cowboy's skill and popularity.

The match was a draw, according to the officials. According to fans who saw it—well, if they were from anywhere near Texas, they claimed that the ex-puncher had won it in a breeze. A return match was demanded, and arrangements were made. It seemed that a new—and one of the youngest—champions was about to be crowned.

Unfortunately for Bob, a previous date had Hutton meeting a northern flash who, like his Texas counterpart, had blazed his way into the topmost categories of the sport. His name was Pat O'Connor of New Zealand. History has it that Pat beat Hutton decisively, and thus nosed Ellis out of an early title shot. Rarely does a new champion take on anyone who so nearly beat his predecessor.

But how long can Bob Ellis be denied? He has continued his amazing trail-blazing, scorching the likes of Big Bill Miller, Wilber Snyder, Dick the Bruiser, and just about all the other top contenders. His size—6-3, and weight—245, make him dangerous to anyone; this plus his exceptional speed, a combination of science and bruising trip-hammering, could take Ellis all the way.

His spare time has been reduced to a minimum. His young bride likes the ease and peace of the Square Circle Ranch, as does Bob. He could retire there anytime, at 28, and live in comfort and security for the rest of his life. And, some day, he will. He has promised that to himself and his family.

But not yet. There is something Cowboy Bob Ellis has to do with his life. "I'm not good enough at anything else, any more, to get to the top—just wrestling. And—well, I've decided, as I did six years ago when I fixed that flat tire for Sandor Szabo, to make it."

Among others, Strangler Lewis bets he will. Any takers? •

KILLER KOWALSKI

(*continued from page* 21)

two, skinny as a rail at 135 pounds, with deep-set eyes and a gaunt expression, he was the chief target of neighborhood bullies.

One dark, cold winter night he was walking along a street in Windsor, reflecting on his state of health, when he saw a YMCA sign. He wandered in, strolled down a long corridor and into a room. A young man with well-developed muscles, broad chest and bronzed skin, put a weight down as Kowalski entered. The kid decided to test the poundage, but found he didn't have the strength even to budge the weight. The other man laughed.

Then, seeing the shadow of despair on Kowalski's face, he said, "Say, kid, you could use some of this. I'll bet you could gain 30 pounds." The weight-lifter glanced at Wladek's huge hands and king-sized feet. "With proper training, you could be a real giant."

Kowalski's eyes brightened. Encouraged by others in the weight-lifting class, who were attracted by the youth's sincerity, Wladek saved his pennies and joined the Y, concentrating on physical exercises.

Within a year he weighed nearly 200 pounds. His shoulders widened, his posture was corrected, his flabby muscles became reservoirs of power. He lost his haunted look and acquired an air of confidence.

By the time he was 18, Kowalski added two more inches to his height, and at 22 he was a six-foot-seven giant with 265 well distributed pounds over his huge frame.

Bert Ruby, a former professional wrestler and now a Detroit promoter, watched the youth's remarkable development and one day he suggested that he try his hand at wrestling. "A man of your size goes into the ring with a big advantage," Ruby told the skeptical Wladek. But a chance to make money was too enticing for Kowalski, who was then studying engineering at Assumption College. When Ruby mentioned the figure "fifty dollars," Wladek Kowalski became a professional wrestler.

He took a terrible clobbering in his debut when Lou (Klein) Bastien tortured him with every hold in the book before laying him out cold with a flying tackle. Only the five $10 bills Bert Ruby slipped into his hand eased the pain and humiliation.

The battered Wladek went home that night undecided whether to stick to his engineering or try to get even with Lou Bastien. When he multiplied $50 by the five working days in every week, his decision was made—To hell with engineering!

Under the expert teaching of Ruby, Kowalski progressed quickly. He learned most of the holds and how to fall without breaking a bone or ripping cartilage. But most important of all, he learned that nice guys get nowhere fast.

"The fans don't really appreciate a wrestler who sticks to the rules," mused The Killer. "You ask why I do the things I do in the ring? I'll tell you. "It's the *real* me coming out. They don't call me Killer for nothing!"

Kowalski will always be "The Killer" as long as he wrestles for a living. After every bout he can shrug off all the "Dear Stinker" letters, the cigar butts and the sharp pins and have a helluva laugh as he walks to the bank. •

ROCCA

(*continued from page* 12)

between mind and body.

What was the result of this universal acclamation? In the first five years of his reign as Mr. Wrestling, Antonino Rocca earned more money than any other athlete in history with the possible exception of Babe Ruth, Jack Dempsey and Joe Louis. He became a household fixture.

Until 1955, Wrestling, despite Rocca, who could not carry the burden alone for eight years, again began to decline. But not for long. Rocca, aided by Mondt, figured out a way to save the situation.

"I will get off television," he decided. I will wrestle at Madison Square Garden and other places—but if the people want to see me, they'll have to *come* in person!"

As it happened, there was, at this time, a handsome young wrestler, small but wiry, named Miguel Perez, from Puerto Rico. Wrestling solo in the New York area, he was good but not a big draw. Rocca decided to team up with him. "There were," he says today, "more than a half million Puerto Ricans in the New York area. These people, for the most part poor and downtrodden—like all people who move into a new country, at first—needed a hero, a symbol to look up to and cheer. By teaming up with Perez, I became that symbol."

If Antonino Rocca had been popular before, he now assumed godlike proportions. And more records began to fall. Just before Rocca-Perez started laying them on the canvas, and in the aisles, the Bronx Winter Garden shows were drawing no more than $200 or so, even with Rocca billed separately. But from the time he first joined with Perez, the gates jumped to $1000, with the place jam-packed with customers, all screaming deliriously.

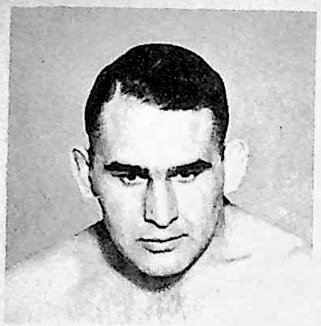
From there the jump was to the Garden. Since their debut there in 1955, Rocca and Perez have sold out the big sports house more than 20 times. At least a half dozen times, nearly $65,000 came into the till, with more than 20,000 fans crammed into the huge arena. Several times, Rocca performed alone; at one of these performances, he drew a record 21,950 persons who paid $64,-680.25, also a Garden record. That was on January 3, 1960.

There is a select and exclusive little group of big-name wrestlers who are called trouble shooters in the trade. When business is bad in one section of the country, one of these stars will go there to help. Because he is a national name, the fans will flock to see him. The idea catches on, and even after he leaves, the interest remains aroused. This exclusive group of miraculously endowed wrestling stars numbered just three—and with the retirement of Lou Thesz, there are only two: Buddy Rogers and Antonino Rocca.

Rocca can go into any town in the country and on the night he wrestles, all other forms of entertainment will stop. The bowling alleys will be empty, the television sets darkened.

What makes Antonino Rocca one of the great attractions of our time? Who can tell? Maybe only Rocca himself.

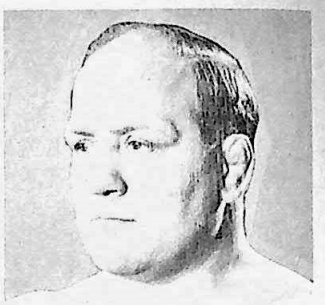
For, as he says, "I love the people. I love *everybody!*" Men like that come along only once every thousand years or so. •



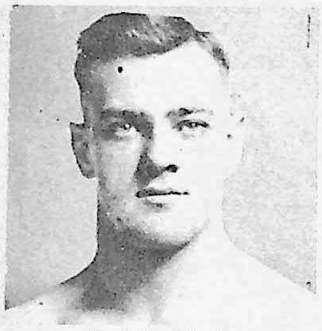
Ed (Strangler) Lewis

Stanislaus Zbyszko

Ed Don George

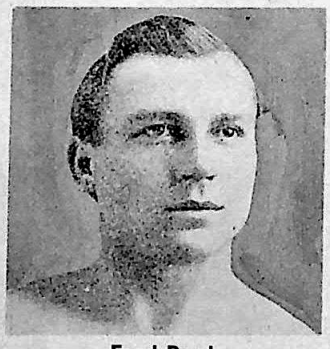


Dick Shikat

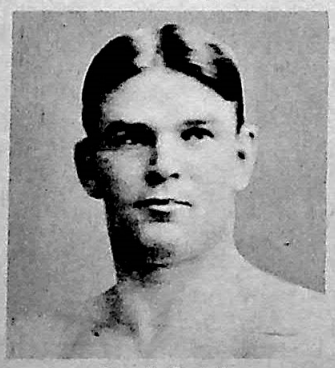


Earl Caddock

Joe Stecher



Fred Beel

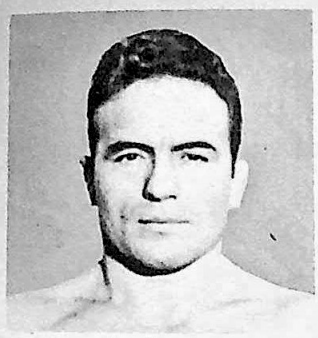


Frank Gotch

WORLD HEAVYWE

from Frank Gotch

1905 – Frank Gotch defeated George Hackenschmidt in first international championship match.
1906 – Fred Beel defeated Gotch.
1906 – Gotch defeated Beel.
1913 – Gotch retired as world champion.
1914 – In tournament to determine Gotch's successor, Charley Cutler, defeated Henry Ordeman and Jesse Westergard to win recognition.
1915 – Joe Stecher defeated Cutler.
1917 – Earl Caddock defeated Stecher.
1920 – Stecher defeated Caddock.
1921 – Ed (Strangler) Lewis defeated Stecher.
1922 – Stanislaus Zbyszko defeated Lewis.
1925 – Wayne Munn defeated Zbyszko.
1925 – Stanislaus Zbyszko defeated Munn.
1925 – Stecher defeated Zbyszko.
1928 – Lewis defeated Stecher.
1929 – Gus Sonnenberg defeated Lewis.
1931 – Ed Don George defeated Sonnenberg.
1931 – Ed Lewis defeated George.
1931 – Henry DeGlane defeated Lewis.
1931 – Ed Don George defeated DeGlane.
1931 – In a tournament to decide the championship in Pennsylvania, Dick Shikat defeated Jim Londos and claimed the world title.
1932 – Londos defeated Shikat.
1932 – In a New York match, where Dick Shikat was recognized as champion, Lewis defeated Shikat.
1933 – Jim Browning defeated Lewis.
1934 – Jim Londos defeated Browning.
1935 – Danny O'Mahoney defeated Londos.
1935 – O'Mahoney defeated George, who had claimed the title since he defeated DeGlane in 1931. By defeating both Londos and George, O'Mahoney became undisputed world champion.
1936 – Dick Shikat defeated O'Mahoney.



Jim Londos

Danno O'Mahoney

Everett Marshall

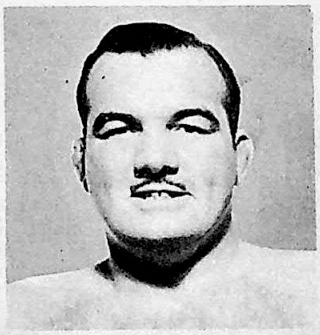
Lou Thesz

IGHT CHAMPIONS

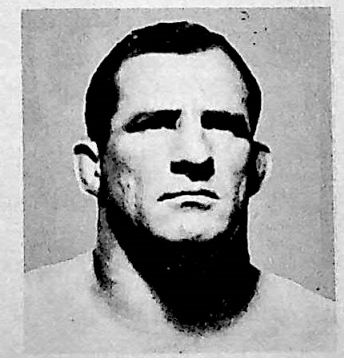
to Pat O'Connor

Bronko Nagurski

Ray Steele



Whipper Billy Watson



Pat O'Connor

1936 – Ali Baba defeated Shikat.

1936 – Referee disqualified Ali Baba in New Jersey ring and awarded the title to Dave Levin. But the New Jersey Athletic Commission later reversed the verdict, thus allowing Ali Baba to retain the title.

1936 – Everett Marshall defeated Ali Baba.

1937 – Lou Thesz defeated Marshall.

1938 – Steve (Crusher) Casey defeated Thesz.

1938 – (September) The National Wrestling Association at its convention in Montreal recognized Marshall as champion for two reasons: (1) Casey was out of the country (2) Marshall was disqualified in his bout with Casey when he tossed Casey out of the ring. This decision was soon reversed because, as Marshall's manager, Billy Sandow, pointed out, "the action was not deliberate."

1939 – Lou Thesz beat Marshall.

1939 – Bronko Nagurski defeated Thesz.

1940 – Ray Steele defeated Nagurski.

1941 – Sandor Szabo defeated Nagurski.

1942 – Bill Longson defeated Szabo.

1942 – Yvon Robert defeated Longson.

1942 – Bobby Managoff defeated Robert.

1943 – Bill Longson defeated Managoff.

1947 – Whipper Billy Watson defeated Longson.

1947 – Lou Thesz defeated Watson.

1947 – Bill Longson defeated Thesz.

1948 – Lou Thesz defeated Longson.

1956 – Whipper Billy Watson defeated Thesz.

1956 – Lou Thesz defeated Watson.

1957 – Dick Hutton defeated Thesz.

1959 – Pat O'Connor defeated Dick Hutton in St. Louis, Mo.

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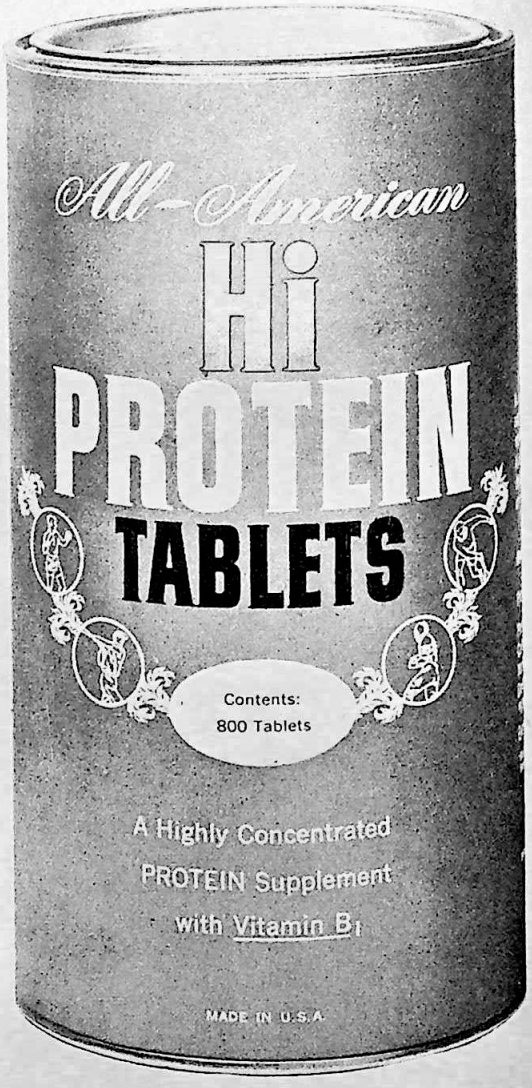

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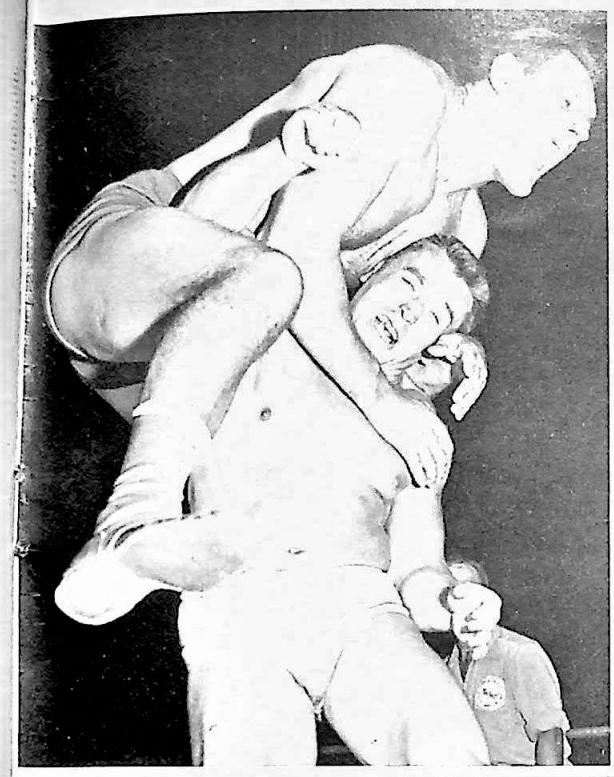

Kowalski, up, and Carpentier

Nell Stewart, left, and Lilly Bitters

The Bastien Brothers

Official WRESTLING RATINGS

A poll of leading promoters, newsmen and the wrestlers themselves guided us in compiling these ratings.

MALE

1 – PAT O'CONNOR
2 – BUDDY ROGERS
3 – ANTONINO ROCCA
4 – EDOUARD CARPENTIER
5 – WHIPPER WATSON
6 – VERNE GAGNE
7 – KILLER KOWALSKI
8 – BOB ELLIS
9 – GENE KINISKI
10 – DICK HUTTON

FEMALE

1 – JUNE BYERS
2 – JUDY GRABLE
3 – LORRAINE JOHNSON
4 – PENNY BANNER
5 – CORA COMBS
6 – ELLA WALDEK
7 – NELL STEWART
8 – BONNIE WATSON
9 – ROSE ROMAN
10 – KATHY STARR

TAG TEAMS

1 – THE KANGAROOS
2 – THE BASTIEN BROTHERS
3 – ANTONINO ROCCA and MIGUEL PEREZ
4 – THE SHARPE BROTHERS
5 – GEORGE BECKER and SANDY SCOTT
6 – THE GALLAGHER BROTHERS
7 – TINY MILLS and STANLEY KOWALSKI
8 – THE KALMIKOFF BROTHERS
9 – JOHNNY BAREND and GENE DUBUQUE
10 – THE SHIRE BROTHERS

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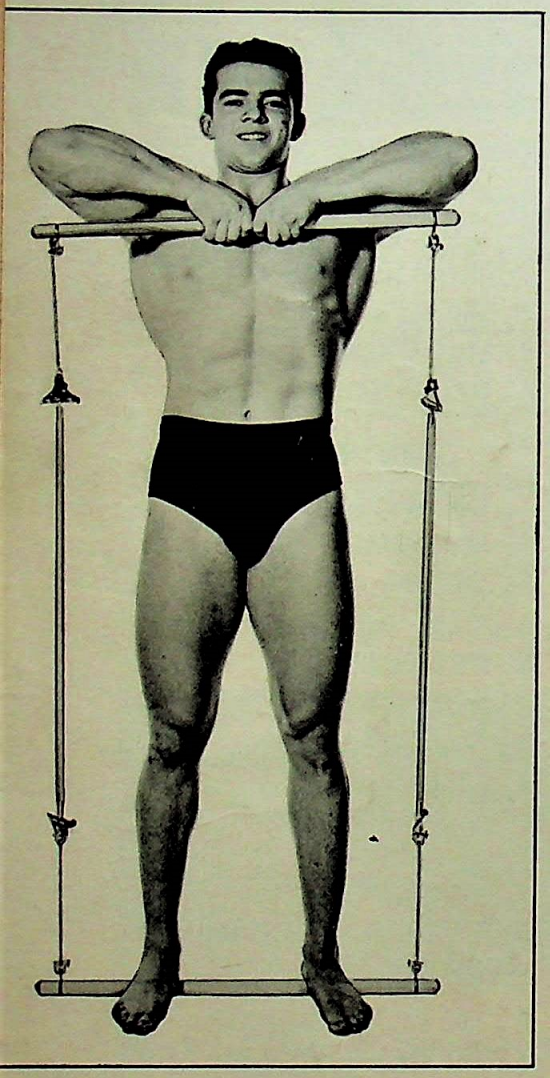

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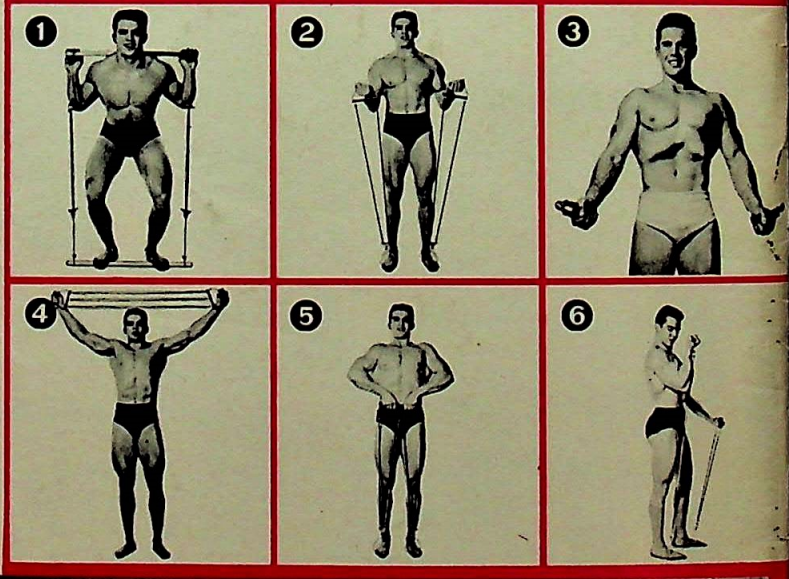

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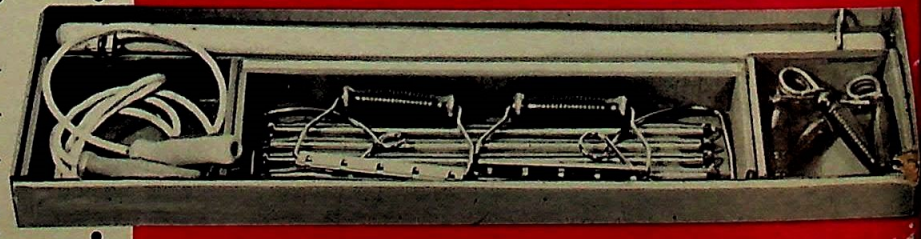

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